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Tuesday 1 November 2016

Mardi 1^{er} novembre 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Todd Decker

Greffier
Todd Decker

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 1 November 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 1^{er} novembre 2016

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. We welcome our new Clerk, Mr. Todd Decker, for his first day—his first prayers. Please join me in praying for him—I mean, please join me in prayers.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROMOTING AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA PROMOTION DU LOGEMENT ABORDABLE

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

Bill 7, An Act to amend or repeal various Acts with respect to housing and planning / Projet de loi 7, Loi modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois en ce qui concerne le logement et l'aménagement du territoire.

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

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm delighted to have an opportunity today to speak on Bill 7, the Promoting Affordable Housing Act.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I hope I get an opportunity.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's good to have the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke here fully rapt with attention, as he always is to our debates.

I would like to thank everyone who has participated in this debate. We all know that when people have a home, they are healthier for it. They're able to pursue employment opportunities, and they're equipped to participate and to contribute better to the communities in which they live.

The Promoting Affordable Housing Act, if passed, would support improved access to suitable and affordable housing, and modernize our social housing system. The first provision of Bill 7 that I would like to highlight today is in the Planning Act, amendments that will allow municipalities to introduce inclusionary zoning. Inclusionary zoning would allow municipalities to require that affordable housing units be included in new residential developments. It has been used in over 500 municipalities in the United States to increase the supply of affordable housing, particularly for low- to moderate-income households.

Our neighbourhoods are stronger and more vital when they include a mix of people who are able to choose where they live from a range of housing. When people have stable and affordable places they can call home, it

opens up possibilities for better education, health and work.

I would like to talk a little bit on Trillium Housing. Trillium Housing is an organization in Toronto that assists low- to middle-income people to afford their own homes by assuming essentially a second mortgage on the property where they take equity in the property. If a property comes up for, let's say, \$300,000, they would assume a 25% piece in that; they would own that 25%. They would pay the carrying costs and they would hold that piece until the family moved in, enjoyed it and used it as 100% their own home, but were only financing it on the basis of 75%. As a result, when they sold it, they would accrue the benefits of the increased value on their 75%. Trillium Housing will get the other 25% with its accrued equity, which will go back into the pool in order to create more opportunities for affordable housing. It's a tremendous opportunity to assist low- and middle-income people buying ownership and highlights how important that ownership is.

Local real estate markets ultimately set the price for market-rate units. As such, developers of buildings with affordable housing units secured through inclusionary zoning must competitively price their units within the overall market. For an organization like Trillium and other social housing providers, we will hope that they will be able to find opportunities where development charges are commensurate with the kinds of objectives of municipalities to ensure that these housing units get built and aren't a barrier to the building of them.

I'd like to comment on Dr. Lisa Sturtevant, who is a housing policy expert. She states that "the most highly regarded empirical evidence suggests that inclusionary housing programs can produce affordable housing and do not lead to significant declines in overall housing production or to increases," significant or otherwise, "in market-rate prices."

The second concern I would like to raise is that inclusionary zoning would discourage new builds and lead to a lower supply of units. We've heard that from certain members in the House over the course, and I would like to address that issue directly. Over time, land prices will absorb some or all of the costs of inclusionary zoning, as Rick Jacobus notes in his policy focus report.

The member from Oxford also noted concerns that Bill 7 does not allow affordable units to be built off-site. Speaker, this is an issue to consider, and we look forward to examining the issue in more detail during committee.

I would also like to recognize some of the comments that the third party has made regarding inclusionary

zoning. One of the comments that came up during this debate was around the use of section 37. Speaker, as you know, section 37 is the provision in the Ontario Planning Act that allows municipalities to extract benefits from developers in return for allowing developments that exceed height and/or density restrictions.

We've had examples of that tremendous opportunity in Beaches—East York, like the development of a YMCA on Kingston Road. The municipality was able to grant an extra level on the main street to the YMCA for housing purposes, so as to accommodate, on the ground floor and the basement, two levels of the YMCA for the community. It's a community hub. When it's finished, it will be a community hub which will have gymnasiums, swimming pools and a whole bunch of community-based programs. It's an extremely important section, and they were able to use it in this regard.

Bill 7 will restrict municipalities applying inclusionary zoning from using section 37 except for as provided in regulation. The third party has raised concerns regarding this restriction. We look forward to examining this point much more closely during committee.

Inclusionary zoning is just one of the many tools that the province is moving ahead with, to increase the supply of affordable housing.

The second provision I would like to highlight is the amendment that we are proposing to the Development Charges Act that will exempt secondary suites in new homes from development charges. The proposed amendment would reduce the cost of developing second units in new homes. Now—

Applause.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you.

During debate, we heard much about the importance of secondary units, including:

- additional supply of affordable housing rental units;
- income-integrated neighbourhoods that better support public transit, local businesses and the local labour market;
- job creation in the construction and the renovation industry;
- increased neighbourhood densities and more effective infrastructure use; and
- intensified use of existing housing stock.

For many of us—certainly as I first bought homes in the city of Toronto—it was absolutely imperative, with the value—at the time, housing was relatively cheap. The first house I bought was for \$100,000. But the interest rates at the time were 15%, 16%, and in order for me to afford my first house, we had to produce a secondary unit in the basement and got rental income from it. It assisted my partner and I moving forward with our first house.

The third aspect of the bill I would like to highlight is the amendment to the Housing Services Act. Currently under the Housing Services Act, ministerial consent is required for the transfer or selling of social housing projects. The proposed change would enhance the ability of service managers to make decisions for generating

revenues to reinvest in new social and affordable housing assets that meet local housing needs.

Should Bill 7 be passed, a ministerial directive would be issued to ensure that tenants are protected and consulted, and all the revenue derived from sales will be re-invested for housing purposes

As part of the debate today on the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy, this bill will propose changes under the Promoting Affordable Housing Act which will, if passed, create a meaningful increase in the supply of affordable housing. It will ensure more stability and security for municipal service managers, and it will serve social housing tenants more effectively and allow social housing tenants to retain more of their income without having to face higher rents or evictions.

0910

Improving access to affordable housing is part of our government's economic plan to build Ontario up, because when people have a home, they are healthier, they're more ready for employment, and they're better able to participate and continue in their communities.

We wanted the debate to continue—and it went past the six-and-a-half-hour mark—so that more members would have an opportunity to present their views on the bill. But now, the bill has seen nine and a half hours of debate, over eight sitting days over the last month and, according to my count, we've had over 30 members of the Legislature already speak to the bill.

Speaker, there has been considerable debate on the bill and we have heard from a wide range of viewpoints. We've taken many of the concerns of the members opposite into consideration, and we'll be addressing it more fully during committee. It's time now that we put this bill to a vote for second reading, and hopefully we will be referred to committee, where important work can take place. In committee, the members of all parties will hear from stakeholders who have an interest in this bill. Members of the public will also be able to provide their important input on the bill. After that, members of the committee will have an opportunity to move amendments, significant amendments, amendments that will strengthen the bill and allow this House to move on and debate other matters.

There are other very important matters that we want to bring forward. We have Bill 27, the Burden Reduction Act. Who isn't in favour of reducing red tape?

Interjections.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Even though there's chirping on the other side, Speaker, I know that they're very supportive of the Burden Reduction Act. There's Bill 39, the Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act. We need to have considerably more debate on that. We look forward to hearing the views of the members. And, of course, there's Bill 45, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act.

We'd like to spend time debating some of these other bills. They're important pieces of legislation. They're also before the House, but until we get this one out of the way—we have to refer it to committee. Speaker, as a result, I would like to move that this question now be put.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Potts has moved that the question be now put. I am satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I believe I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion that the question be now put, please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion that the question be now put, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, this vote will be deferred until after question period today.

Vote deferred.

AGGREGATE RESOURCES AND
MINING MODERNIZATION ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA MODERNISATION
DES SECTEURS DES RESSOURCES
EN AGRÉGATS ET DES MINES

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 27, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's unfortunate. I really wanted to speak to Bill 7, but it looks like I'm going to have to continue my lead-off on Bill 39. I was one of the many members who didn't get the opportunity to speak to Bill 7, and I wanted to bring up some of the issues with members of the government announcing that they had this new-found money for the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative that they've come up with. It's money that's been rolled over year after year after year, but they claim it's new money. Actually, if you talk to anybody who's working in the housing industry in our counties or in our municipalities, they'll tell you that with the increases in electricity costs and the number of people that are being added to those homeless waiting lists, the money they're getting year after year is actually less than what the government members are saying. They're saying it's increases.

But I know I'm not here to talk about Bill 7, Mr. Speaker; I'm here to talk about Bill 39, which is the Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act. It was last Thursday afternoon that I was continuing with my one-hour leadoff, and I was talking about the need for this bill to have very plain and simple rules in the legislation. We need to have simple legislation so that everybody knows what the playing field is and what the rules of the game are, and that goes for the proponents who want to open an aggregate pit or quarry and for those in the community who are concerned about an aggregate pit or quarry opening in their community.

You know I'm a hockey guy, Mr. Speaker, and you know I love sports. I think it's very clear, if I could draw a sports analogy here, that two of the most hated penalties in hockey are the delay-of-game penalty and the too-many-men-on-the-ice penalty. The delay-of-game penalty is when a player shoots it over the glass in their own end. The too-many-men-on-the-ice penalty is too many men on the ice. It's pretty simple. The referees have to call it. The reason I'm convinced that these are the two penalties the fans probably hate the most is because the officials have no discretion about whether or not those penalties are called. If you're the sixth player on the ice for your team and you play the puck, it's a penalty. If you fire the puck over the glass in the defensive zone, it's a penalty. The rules are pretty clear and simple. It's not like charging or interference, where we're arguing about whether a player took the required number of steps or whether a player still had possession of the puck. While those two rules are hated, they're also rules that the players, the fans and even the announcers know are going to be called when they happen. They're the two penalties where no one blames the ref, because they're really simple: You shoot the puck over the glass in the defensive zone, and it's a penalty.

I think the same rules should apply to the legislation, the Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act, that's before us here today. There's too much left to interpretation and the discretion of the minister in this legislation, and I think we need to correct that, and we can correct that when we get to committee. So there is the opportunity, if this bill makes it to committee, which I suspect it will because it's a government bill, that there will be amendments that the opposition parties—at least, the official opposition—will be proposing to this bill to make it clearer just what the legislation does say.

Instilling faith that a process is fair, unbiased and unsusceptible to sustained lobbying efforts is hard, but it's done by making sure that the opportunities for the process to be manipulated are as few and far between as we can make them.

There are two last issues that I wanted to talk to in my remaining 20 minutes here this morning. The first issue is that I want to address the new section 3 as it pertains to indigenous consultation. We have a great and ongoing conversation in this country about the role that our indigenous people play as stewards of the land and the place that our natural resources play in their culture as well as their practices. This conversation has been making news across the country, usually with regard to the consultation process that has to be done to gain approval for energy projects. There's a good reason for this. Certain provinces have a really bad history of consultation with our indigenous communities when it comes to large-scale projects. One of the most famous examples, of course, is the Kenney Dam, which caused the flooding of an entire community. Ontario is by no means a saint when it comes to incidents like this.

However, there's an opportunity here that is presented by the fact that the Trans Mountain and Site C dam projects have drawn attention to this particular area of

public policy. It's a chance for Ontario to set down a model for how to consult indigenous communities in an open and transparent way that ensures respect for indigenous claims, encouraging good business practices and a common standard of consultation that would be a positive step going forward. So we have an opportunity to start here. I'm not pretending that opening or expanding a pit or a quarry is the same as running a couple of hundred kilometres of pipeline, but it can set a precedent for how we do things here, because this isn't the last time that we're going to have this conversation.

I'm going to both compliment the government and criticize it here. I like one thing that the minister did where the bill states that "before exercising any power under this act relating to licences or permits that has the potential to adversely affect established or credibly asserted aboriginal or treaty rights." Here, I suspect the government learned a lesson from past attempts to ensure indigenous consultation efforts were a part of an application process, and we ended up with an indigenous community a couple of thousand miles away from a proposed energy project that didn't impact on its traditional territory signing on to the energy project to help the developer's path through the application process.

0920

There have been a couple of examples here in Ontario where this has occurred, where a proposed energy project for a certain area received aboriginal or indigenous approval from a territory that had no interest or no connection at all to the community where the power project was being proposed. To avoid that, the bill very effectively states that the permit has to have the potential to adversely affect established or credible indigenous or treaty rights. It's good it doesn't establish an open-ended and unlimited duty to consult. It sets very definitive parameters for consultation that both indigenous communities and proprietors are made aware of going in.

That's a positive, and it eased one of the concerns that I had when I read the blueprint that the government had submitted to the EBR last year, in part because of the experience of that energy project near St. Thomas. The language in this part of the bill made me wonder if the government's tendency to cut corners in favour of good optics would rear its ugly head here. That has been largely mitigated by the section that I quoted above.

Again, just to elaborate on that, we had a wind turbine project that was proposed for one of the townships in the St. Thomas and London area—it was being proposed by a developer—and it had received aboriginal approval. You know how the points system now works that the government has brought in: You receive so many points if the local municipality is in favour of the renewable energy project, and you receive so many points if there's aboriginal or indigenous support to that project as well. Well, the project in question in one of the townships outside St. Thomas came from a band that was 1,000 kilometres away from St. Thomas and had no connection—so there was that loophole that existed, and some proponents were using that loophole to get support for

projects that were nowhere near the affected indigenous territory.

However, there's a pretty glaring omission to that—going back to the section that I quoted above. Previous to the section that I quoted, the new section 3 states, "For greater certainty, the minister will consider whether adequate consultation with aboriginal communities has been carried out..." The problem with that passage, although it sounds good, is that nowhere in the bill is there a definition of what constitutes "adequate consultation." "Adequate consultation" is pretty open to interpretation. No definition of "adequate consultation" that's used in other legislation is used, and there's no subsequent clause in the legislation that states that "adequate consultation" will be prescribed in legislation.

Here, we run into a problem, as we did with Bill 135 in the last session of Parliament. The government has drafted a piece of legislation that largely depends on this government being in power forever, and we certainly hope on this side of the House that that's not the case—and given the news that's come out over the last 12 hours or so, we suspect that there are many people who agree with us. This government isn't going to be in power forever, I think we all know that; even the government knows that.

What section 3, as currently drafted, does is give the minister unchecked and undefined power to determine what does and doesn't constitute adequate consultation. And if you've been paying attention, I think you'll know that since I arrived here five years ago as the MPP for Prince Edward–Hastings, there have been at least three different Ministers of Natural Resources, and I think there have been four different ministers over the last five years on this file.

We need the legislation to be defined and clear so that everyone knows the rules of the game, so that when it comes to adequate consultation in the eyes of the current minister—that could very well change when a new minister comes into that seat, into that position.

I speak from personal experience. It's almost impossible to get two Tories to agree on a common definition of anything that isn't written down, much less, say, one Tory minister and one Liberal minister—which we know is going to be the case, because we're going to be going from a Liberal minister to a Tory minister next time.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Comedy hour.

Mr. Todd Smith: You're not laughing.

Australia has a clearly written and defined framework for what constitutes adequate consultation for indigenous communities. It begins, as this bill does, by stating that consultation is only necessary when a recognized claim is present. The Australian framework refers to it as "title." An assessment of whether there is an active claim of title is a part of the process to determine whether further consultation is necessary. Where title is present, it can be addressed in a number of ways, but the two most frequent are a right to negotiate process, or the independent negotiation of a registered indigenous land use agreement. What this framework has led to, since it was introduced,

has been a considerable number of aggregate proprietors going the route of direct negotiations through an indigenous land use agreement rather than the government's negotiation process.

That's ultimately what we want as well. Agreements which are mutually beneficial to all of the concerned parties are what we want. We don't want an acrimonious process. That acrimonious process is what gets us into the delays that we've seen in approvals for pits and quarries that, instead of going three years, as prescribed by the ministry, go to eight, nine and 10 years, like we're seeing right now. What we want are agreements which are mutually beneficial to all of the concerned parties. We don't want this acrimonious process.

There was a great piece that Graeme Hamilton wrote for the Post a few months back, where the reporter interviewed Matthew Coon Come, the former national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, with regard to why the Quebec Cree nations experience different living conditions than Cree nations on the Ontario side of the provincial border. One of the reasons given was that the agreement between the Quebec government and the Cree regarding the James Bay hydroelectric projects allowed the Cree communities of northern Quebec to see an economic benefit from the projects there. While that was a long process that had its share of contentious issues, it led to an end which has been beneficial to the interested parties.

"We had the water. The governments and the crown corporations wanted it, so they needed to talk to us," Coon Come said. "I often wonder, if they didn't need that resource, would they have talked to us? I don't think so," was the end of his quote. That's a fair point, but it's also an opportunity. He would later say that the economic benefits seen from the project created an opportunity to strengthen indigenous cultures and institutions.

While I think the section on indigenous consultation is a good start, I think it needs to be further strengthened, and that's work that we can do at committee.

Finally, we arrive at an issue that I kind of addressed off the top of my one-hour leadoff, and that was the issue of recycled aggregate. Before I launch into my last subject matter, I want to return to the hard work that had previously been done by the member from Dufferin-Caledon on this issue. Not only has she done considerable work on this through her own private member's bill, but she also managed to convince the government to include amendments regarding recycled aggregate in government legislation during the last session of Parliament. So to the member for Dufferin-Caledon and the deputy leader of our party, I thank you for all your hard work on this file. Let's hope I don't mess it up too much in the time that I have left here this morning.

Speaker, off the top of this speech, which seems like it was a couple of decades ago but it was really just last Thursday afternoon, I mentioned that depending on the year and the number of projects, the aggregate usage in this province is usually between 160 and 180 million tonnes. That's per year, the aggregate used.

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Since 1990, we've gone from using six million tonnes of recycled aggregate per year to 13 million tonnes of recycled aggregate per year, which means that we're at about 7% of what we use. We've been at that percentage for most of the last decade.

The Ministry of Transportation is a little better. As of 2012, it was using about 2.3 million tonnes per year, which was about 18% of its annual usage, so the Ministry of Transportation is doing a little bit better.

When the committee on general government looked into the use of recycled aggregates back in 2012, it found that growing the use of recycled aggregates would reduce the overall environmental impacts of the industry and would reduce demand for primary aggregate products. The Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy actually agreed with them and urged the ministry to establish incentives for the greater use of recycled aggregates. The institute found that in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, between 15% and 20% of aggregates used were recycled materials. The UK produced 56 million tonnes of aggregate, or four times what Ontario uses in a single year, in 2006, so we're behind the curve.

Ten percent of the aggregates used in Sydney, Australia, come from recycled aggregates. The number of different materials being used in Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand is astounding. New Zealand has more than a dozen companies competing just to produce the kind of recycled aggregate we're used to, which is crushed concrete.

Recycled aggregate, whether crushed concrete or slag or pellet, is used in road base, concrete blocks and insulation in countries around the world. If we want to minimize the conflicts that we run into with new aggregate product pits and quarries, then this is a way to do it: Increase the use of recycled aggregate.

Presently, only 7%—that's 7%—of land in the province is even available for aggregate extraction, and that land is being pushed further and further from where the aggregate is being used, mostly here in the GTA. As the primary aggregate sources become less and less available, or more and more carbon-intensive to extract, we still need to build roads, bridges, sidewalks and subways in Ontario.

So the government needs a strategy to effectively incentivize the expansion of the use of recycled aggregate, even just to levels where we would be globally competitive with other jurisdictions that are already doing it. But in the legislation, the government is still including the tonnage of recycled material in the total extraction tonnage limits for a site. That means that operators have no incentive to operate recycling operations on their site.

Two reasons were provided by the government as to why they had included recycled aggregate in the existing tonnage limits. The first was that the government wanted to be able to track what kind of recycled material was being put into the product stream. That's not an

unreasonable concern, but when you look at the materials that other countries have in their recycled aggregate products, you know the technology is available already to make anything that could end up as recycled material safe.

The second concern—and I believe it's probably the more prevalent one—is that if you separate the recycled tonnage from the overall tonnage limit, you'll increase the truck traffic in and out of the site: not unreasonable, but that's a pretty easy obstacle to overcome as well. A lot of other countries have already done it.

This is where the industry is headed. We're not making more rocks. That's a bit of a millions-of-years process. We're not making rocks. As I've stated, certain kinds of aggregate, because of government regulation, must be used in certain circumstances. If we now have to dedicate certain kinds of aggregate which are only available in certain parts of the province to things like surface grade on roads, then we need recycling to be used in places where primary aggregate may not be necessary. As I mentioned last week, not all rock is created equal.

Therefore, one amendment that we'll be recommending is separating recycled aggregate tonnage from the total tonnage limit at an aggregate site.

To wrap up in the 90 seconds that I have left, from the 30,000-foot level, flying high above the pits and quarries in Ontario, we're broadly supportive of the initiatives that are included in this bill—broadly supportive of the initiatives in the bill; however, there are five issues where the government's plan on the details needs to be better fleshed out.

While the government's preference to do things through regulations has been well documented in almost every piece of government legislation that appears before the House, it's too heavily leaned on in sections of this bill. It's my hope that the minister can take note of some of the suggestions that I've included in my remarks as a basis for compromise as the bill moves forward.

As I've said, there needs to be a little more clarity and a little more definition, both for the proponents of the pits and quarries and for the concerned neighbourhoods that are near these pits and quarries. I think that we can make some significant environmental and economic progress if we tweak the bill just enough to affect broader realities that are already at work in the industry around the world.

Speaker, this was my first opportunity to do a full 60 minutes as a lead since being here. Thank you for the opportunity to split it up over two days to give my vocal cords a little bit of a break. We look forward to further discussion on Bill 39, the Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I did enjoy the debate brought by the member from Prince Edward–Hastings on Bill 39. I think we all need to be educated on aggregates in the province because I don't think a lot of people realize the broad category of what aggregates are. They are coarse materials like sand, gravel, crushed stone and

slag. These things go into our roads and our buildings, and they build our communities.

My understanding is that there was quite a bit of work done on this bill with the A Blueprint for Change document, but unfortunately, this government didn't use a lot of the wonderful suggestions in the legislation. They've left the legislation lacking in the recommendations that came from the blueprint, which means we're going to be wondering which items they're going to adopt, perhaps, if at all—leave it to hope if they're going to put them in regulation and actually make this bill very strong, effective and useful. We wonder about that.

One of the other interesting pieces that I spoke to, from the member from Algoma–Manitoulin—he talked about that there is something good in there, and I'm sure he's going to give us a great presentation in a moment. He talked about the modernization of staking claims. The way we do it now, you go out in person and you stake a claim for mining or aggregate material. Now what they're doing is, they're computerizing it so you can actually stake your claim on technology. The member from Algoma–Manitoulin said that's actually a good change, a good thing that's happening.

I know he's going to talk about some of the things that aren't in the bill with regard to A Blueprint for Change that should really be in this bill so we know what the expectation is of this legislation and how we can move forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: I want to thank the other members who have spoken to this. I listened very carefully to the 60 minutes from the member from Prince Edward–Hastings, who's my critic, and I thank him for a lot of the comments that he thoughtfully delivered in the House. Thank you to the member for London–Fanshawe for also adding her comments to this important debate.

I'm very proud of Bill 39 and where we're at right now. I really just wanted to address a few things that the member opposite had brought up. One is increased participation for the community.

If passed, Bill 39 would:

- support improved information on aggregate operations and enhanced participation;

- create clearer processes to change existing approvals;

- allow for customized consultation plans on applications; and

- enhance record-keeping and reporting provisions by making them digital.

But this is the first of a two-phase process. One is that we're talking about the legislative framework that we're looking at bringing forward for aggregate extraction in the province of Ontario, and then, if passed, we would move forward with consultation on regulatory and policy changes. This is very important because as the regulations are being brought forward, there's much more opportunity for further participation in those regulatory changes—from the public, the indigenous communities and the aboriginal communities.

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As you know, with the history, Mr. Speaker, this is a process that we started years ago in 2012, and we have been adding a lot of those recommendations to this particular proposed bill that has come forward. We will be ensuring that we address a lot of public participation as we go forward. I'm very much looking forward to hearing some of the comments coming forward once this bill, if passed, goes to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's great to have the opportunity to join in the debate even if it's only for two minutes at this point. I want to thank my colleague from Prince Edward–Hastings for his contribution to the debate so far—as he said, his first one-hour leadoff.

I want to talk a little bit about the importance of aggregate. I think it's important that we have new, updated legislation. I know that my colleague from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock along with my colleague from Caledon were part of a committee that looked into the resources act years ago and brought in a lot of recommendations. I don't know how much is incorporated in this bill, but I know it was quite an extensive consultation.

We can't do anything without aggregate. Everything that happens, just in this gigantic city we call Toronto—all of the buildings that are being erected, homes for people, condominiums—we can't do any of that without aggregate. We can't build a road without aggregate to get anywhere across this province. Aggregate is one of the most important resources that we actually extract from the earth. The challenge is making sure that we have ready access, reliable access and reasonable access—that we're not trucking halfway around the world in order to complete projects that require aggregate. Every construction project requires aggregate, whether it's to form concrete or to build roads. It is absolutely required. There's going to have to be an updated act.

We also have to remember that as persons, as people, as property owners and as residents of other parts of the province, we can't automatically just be opposed to any kind of an application to extract aggregate, because our lives and the quality of life that we enjoy in this magnificent country depends on having access to aggregate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is a pleasure to rise, on behalf of the people I represent in London West, in response to the comments that were made by the member for Prince Edward–Hastings. Today, we are looking at Bill 39, An Act to amend the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act. As the previous speaker just mentioned, aggregate resources are vital to all of our communities. We know that we need aggregates to build roads, to build homes, to create the infrastructure that makes our communities not only livable but also beautiful. Aggregates also play an important role in landscaping and the beautification of the places we live.

At the same time, however, aggregate extraction has been historically one of the most contentious land use issues that communities have had to deal with. Often there is opposition from neighbours and local communities where aggregates are extracted. So managing that balance is critically important. However, what's also important is to ensure proper rehabilitation of the aggregate sites once the aggregates have been fully extracted. In my community, we have the Byron gravel pit, which has completed its usefulness. It is now on the market for \$9.9 million, but it offers huge potential for infill development, for the creation of new green spaces right in the centre of the city and for the creation of new and affordable housing. So we need to ensure that there are rehabilitation practices in place to enable this kind of development once the aggregates have been fully extracted from our natural environment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Prince Edward–Hastings for final comments.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thanks to the members from London–Fanshawe and London West for their comments; to my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke; and also to the Minister of Natural Resources, who joins us here this morning as well for debate on this bill, her first bill since becoming the Minister of Natural Resources.

It's a huge issue. It's not the sexiest issue that we deal with in this Legislature, but it is a very, very important issue for building everything, basically, in Ontario. We know that our municipal governments are facing huge infrastructure deficits and infrastructure projects that they're looking after. We know that the federal and provincial governments have promised billions of dollars in infrastructure. We need aggregate if those promises are going to become a reality. If we don't have a system for extracting aggregates in the province that works efficiently, we're going to be in a whole lot of trouble when it comes to delivering on these promises that have been made, when it comes to infrastructure.

Just the fact that approvals for opening a quarry or pit are taking eight, nine and 10 years is a serious concern, especially when that aggregate, according to legislation, is supposed to come from as close to market as possible. If we're taking far too long, if we're buried in red tape and the process is taking six and seven years longer than it's supposed to, to open these pits and quarries, then that's a concern.

The bill addresses that to a certain extent, but there's far too much that's left to interpretation and the discretion of the minister. There needs to be clearer language in the bill. If and when it gets to committee, I know we can correct some of the language in the bill to ensure that we're getting our aggregate as safely and quickly as we possibly can.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always a wonderful privilege and honour to stand here in my seat on behalf of the good people of Algoma–Manitoulin and as temporary critic, during the absence of my colleague the member

from Timmins–James Bay, for the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and also as the critic for the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines.

I'm happy to see that the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry is here joining us this morning. I've always spoken highly of her when dealing with issues. I first got to meet and work with the minister while she was the assistant to the Minister of Finance and also to the Minister of Transportation. The one thing I will always say and give credit where credit is due is that she does her homework. I found that to be one of the things that I enjoyed about working with her. So I know she will be doing her homework on this by participating and listening to some of the debates that we're having here this morning.

I do want to stress one point: What we experienced a little bit here this morning was we were having an earlier discussion about another potential piece of legislation. It's something that we see too often in this place, where closure of the debate is happening. It's frustrating because we don't get a full and wholesome opportunity to discuss the various issues that affect us in our ridings. I know there are many bills that have come forward in this House where I wasn't given the opportunity to speak on behalf of my constituents. I'm begging a little bit of your indulgence here, Mr. Speaker, but I think we want to stress the point that this is one of those issues that is really important to all Ontarians across this province. We're dealing with an issue in the aggregates act that we have been dealing with for many, many years now—too many years, quite frankly.

We have this wonderful document, A Blueprint for Change, which has many, many good highlighted points, some of them asking for stronger oversight, environmental accountability, improved information and participation, increased equalized fees and royalty—which I'm going to touch on during some of my comments. In this, there were 38 recommendations that were made to strengthen the act. There was a vast amount of recommendations adopted and a collaborative approach to developing the engaging of key stakeholders, municipal organizations and aboriginal communities in the fall of 2014.

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I recall those because I participated in some of those meetings. I actually hosted the entire committee, the working group, when they came to Manitoulin Island. They came to the Lafarge quarry. I asked them to stay a little bit longer so they could entertain themselves in getting some of the other wonderful resources that we have on beautiful Manitoulin Island but, unfortunately, they were on a tight schedule and they had to take off. I actually wanted them to come down to Little Current and enjoy some of the wonderful rainbow fish that were there.

I remember that some of the members that were there were very engaged talking to quarry owners about what was limiting them, what their challenges were. Particularly when it comes to Manitoulin Island, one of their challenges is capacity—not over on the island, but cap-

acity over here in Toronto where their product is coming. They're limited. There was opportunity for them to extend. There was opportunity for them to add additional hours of work, additional employees, but unfortunately, they were tied down.

Back to the point that I was making earlier: When you're having a wholesome discussion, each and every one of us in this House has an opportunity to speak on behalf of their constituents and bring the views, as they see them, as to how they're important to the people that they represent in the various areas of our province. When you shut down the debate and when you close off those discussions, you really don't get to hear a wholesome view of what people are experiencing.

From my perspective, I've always come from a perspective from northern Ontario, and I bring the challenges that we have with the distances that we have between our communities. I don't have the same challenges that they have in, let's say, the Ottawa area, the London area, the Windsor area, or, quite frankly, the Belleville area. Those are important for me to hear. As a parliamentarian, I have to make sure I'm making the best decision not only for the people of Algoma–Manitoulin—which I always have at the top of my list, each and every day—but for the betterment of the province as a whole.

I wanted now to go into our discussion about Bill 39, An Act to amend the Aggregate Resources Act and the Mining Act. A lot of my comments are going to be particularly targeted on the Aggregate Resources Act, then I will follow into the Mining Act. The Mining Act modernization, as far as what they're saying this is, is getting to a level or getting clarity on terms within the mining industry, and it's also making sure that everything that is available is put out on computers—easier access; it's getting modernized. Particularly within the context of this bill, it's the same proposal that was proposed just last year, I believe, and unfortunately fell to the wayside because of the House being prorogued.

I want to go into schedule 1 and just highlight some of what's in this bill. Some of the more significant amendments are set out under section 3.1, which “requires the minister to consider whether adequate consultation with aboriginal communities has been carried out before exercising certain powers relating to licences or permits.” Of course, that's something that should have been done a long time ago. Unfortunately it's not within the act right now, and this is the process that has to be put in there.

It begs to actually highlight one of the other concerns from the industry perspective: What is that responsibility? How will the government address this? It is not within the content of the act. There is no clear framework as to what that engagement is going to look like. Who is going to be responsible for that engagement? Is it going to be passed on to industry? Is it going to be on First Nations? Will it be a government role? Again, this is something that I highlight under the aggregates act, because it's something that I'm very experienced with, which is lacking within the Mining Act as well. A lot of our issues and a lot of the challenges that we have are

that there's no clear framework established as far as what engagement is.

Hence, look at the Ring of Fire. The Ring of Fire has been a gem just waiting to be opened up. When I use the reference, I look at it as the potential new Sudbury of northern Ontario. That's the impact that it could potentially have.

However, we've been stumbling as to how we can proceed. We haven't even built a road yet to this area, and within the blueprint that the government has apparently utilized to develop this act, there's still no road that has been built. A lot of what's in here are good ideas that are going to be left to the government to determine how they're going to implement them, and how they're going to bring them into the act. It's going to be a wait-and-see that these things are actually going to come up in the legislation.

Another part is, "The schedule deals with what may happen to a pit or quarry operating in a part of Ontario when that part is designated by regulation..." and "give the minister the power to issue an aggregate licence to a person who holds an aggregate permit to operate such a pit or quarry and to cancel the permit. The schedule also amends section 71 in respect of applications for an aggregate licence that may"—I should use my glasses—"be made by the operator of an established pit or quarry situated in the newly designated part of Ontario.

"The schedule makes several amendments relating to aggregate licences, wayside permits and aggregate permits, including" the "exemptions to sections 7 and 34 allow a person to operate a pit or quarry without an aggregate licence or an aggregate permit..."

In number 2, it says "relating to applications for licences and permits are removed from the act and regulation-making powers are added respecting the preparation of applications and the documentation to be included in applications, including whether to provide a site plan" and "consultation procedures that normally apply to a person applying for an aggregate licence or permit..."

"(3) The minister is given enhanced powers to amend licences and permits and is given the power to require a licensee or permittee" and "given the right to apply to the minister for an amendment to a licence or permit..."

Again, you see new powers or, as they say here, "enhanced powers" for the minister. I know the minister will be using those powers wisely.

You'll have to pardon me, Mr. Speaker. I'm battling a cold. If I go into a coughing frenzy, I will try my best to get under control as quickly as I can.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Pardon me?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: Your voice is sounding gravelly.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Oh, I'm hurting right now.

"Amendments require fees payable under the act to be prescribed by regulation and not set by the minister. The minister is given the ability to waive application fees for licences and permits and other licence and permit fees."

Under the schedule, again, it "amends provisions relating to the Aggregate Resources Trust"—this one I'm going to touch on a little bit later, Mr. Speaker—"to require the trustee to comply with performance reporting requirements that may be prescribed by regulation and to give the minister the power to remove the trustee after giving at least 90 days' notice. Regulation-making authority is added to require fees or other payments under the act that are payable to the trustee to be paid to another prescribed person or entity. Regulations may also provide for the disbursement of those fees and payments by the trustee, person or entity to such other persons or entities as may be prescribed by regulation."

I'll be coming back to that one a little bit later, because I think there's an important point that we need to make to this.

"The schedule includes some amendments relating to enforcement of the act and regulations."

It also "includes amendments to give the ministry powers to obtain more information from licensees and permittees."

Then we fall into schedule number 2. Schedule number 2 is the amendments to the Mining Act. Basically, according to the act, it says "a new electronic mining lands administration system in Ontario, which will include an online registration system for mining claims, and to make certain housekeeping changes to the act."

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I alluded to that in my earlier comments. What it means is that the traditional way of going out on your claims as a prospector is that you go out, you have your tags, you stake out your area, mark it and then get it registered. That will be done from your office on a computer. Those claims that potentially might come up as available or those that have not been worked on may also come up and be available, and individuals who are paying attention may pick up those claims and actually claim them on their own.

A lot of the things that are also changing is some of the terminology, and that includes adding the following terms: "boundary cells" versus "boundary claims," "cell claims," "legacy claims," "mining claims registry" and "mining lands administration system." The act goes on to describe how those are going to change, are going to be amended, are going to be affected.

The references to the prospector's awareness program in sections 19 and 21 and elsewhere throughout the act are updated to reflect the change in the name of the program to the Mining Act Awareness Program—straight-forward.

Under section 38, the portion that is not open for registration is excluded from the claim. If the portion of the cell that is not open for registration later becomes open for registration, that portion then becomes part of the registered cell.

These are some of the definitions that are being changed under this bill. From my understanding from talking to a lot of the stakeholders who are involved in the mining sector, this is something they've been pretty well seeing in other jurisdictions across this country, and

it's time that we came into facilitating how mining is done here in Ontario so that we can attract greater investment. So I will come back to the mining perspective of it later on in my comments.

I wanted to highlight just some of the changes that are coming. When you say "modernization of the Mining Act"—we're changing certain definitions. It's big splash, a nice headline, but we're really accomplishing very small steps where we could be doing a heck of a lot more within the mining sector. I wanted to touch on a few of those from the mining sector because the mining sector in this province hires, indirectly or directly, over 300,000 jobs. If we're going to be doing something, we really need to be looking at what we're doing for the mining sector. I touched on these comments.

I'm not sure, Speaker, if you were at the Meet the Miners event that was held here last week, but I know that when I met up with them, along with our leader, Andrea Horwath, at the morning session, we met with their board of directors. The message that I got from them was quite clear: "If you're going to do any enhancement to the Mining Act, the first one that you have to do is you have to deal with the energy crisis," because a lot of these mining companies are struggling with one of their biggest costs, which is energy consumption and the cost of it.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Yes. You know what? The government did take the right step by making the NIER Program permanent, but not before they had cut it. Something that I know the minister understands, both the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, is that the NIER Program, although it is a good program, gives an indirect competitive advantage to those that have qualified for this program and are directly competing with their competitors who are at a disadvantage because they don't qualify for this program. We need to look at expanding this program to make sure that there's a level playing field within the mining ministry so that all of the mines can benefit from the energy credits that are available to them. That's just one of the issues from the mining industry that they talked about.

The other thing that we need to talk about when it comes to mining is the promotion of our industry. For a long, long time, we always looked at mining as being that dark hole underground. I need to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the technology has significantly improved and has significantly changed the environment, the health and safety factor, the opportunity for jobs in geology—below ground and above ground—and the trades that are there. The opportunities are endless. We're talking about really good-paying jobs that are there. So we need, as a whole and particularly as a government, to boast about our industry that we have here in Ontario.

Just last year, according to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce with the studies that they've done, they had Ontario as ninth, as to where we stood as an attractive jurisdiction in this country. We shouldn't be ninth; we

should be number one. That's where we should be. We have wonderful resources that we have available here.

One of the biggest things—and I'm going to harp on this each and every time that I'm in this House: We need an engagement process. We need to see that if the reports are filed—and don't get me wrong, Mr. Speaker; industry does want to comply with all of the environmental guidelines. They do. They go out of their way; they go over and above what is required of them to make sure that their reports are in. But after those reports are submitted, after the consultation is done, after all of this information is put together, there needs to be a framework put into place as to when we can move on now, because we stay stuck in a certain area. We can't progress. Whose responsibility is it to have the discussion with the various stakeholders, whether it be municipal, whether it be regional or whether it be with a First Nation? Is it industry? Is it government? We need to bring that into a wholesome discussion so that we have a set of guidelines that we can follow so that we can weigh in on how we're going to proceed with the future of opening up a mine. I'll come back to mining after.

My very short comments that I have left this morning are going to be on aggregates, and I do want to touch on the aggregates aspect of this. Aggregates are a major component of our everyday life. In fact, we consume on average 14 tonnes of aggregate per person per year. That's a lot of dirt, Mr. Speaker, and a lot of gravel and rocks. We build buildings, roads, airports, subway tunnels, dams and sewers. As well, landscaping, countertops and septic beds are all composed from aggregates. This is in part why it's so important to make amendments to this bill. It's a necessary component of our lives, so why are we dragging our feet with this legislation?

I'm happy to speak to this bill. The Aggregate Resources Act remains unchanged over five years, even after an ARA review was promised back in September 2011 by this Liberal government during the election campaign, with the Melancthon mega-quarry issue on many people's minds. It has also been three years since the review committee released its report in October 2013 and over two years since the government released its response to the report in February 2014, in which the government promised new legislation by "the fall of 2014." It's no surprise: This government is two years behind.

In October 2013, the committee released its consensus report with 38 recommendations. The comprehensive government response committed to stakeholders and indigenous communities to find solutions. Many of these solutions were found outlined in the blueprint which I alluded to earlier, but that blueprint has more details within it than this legislation does, unfortunately. We're left with the hope that the government will act appropriately and make these changes accordingly.

Four hundred comments were submitted and strong support was received to move forward, as this blueprint was seen as a positive step. Sadly, there are more details about this government's proposal on aggregate policy in the blueprint than, again, in the actual legislation itself.

The blueprint is a great tool and guideline to developing legislation. It's broken down into four sections.

Section 1, "Establishing new sites: Proposals to establish a new aggregate operation or to expand the boundaries of an existing approval require a new application. Requirements for new applications are set out in the Aggregate Resources of Ontario Provincial Standards ... and a regulation under the act requires that all applications follow these standards."

Section 2, "Proposed changes to the management and operation of existing and future sites: This section provides an overview of the changes that are proposed to the Aggregate Resources Act, regulations or provincial standards that will impact the management and operation of existing and future aggregate extraction sites."

Section 3, "Proposed changes to fees and royalties." That was extensively discussed and very much supported by all who participated in the blueprint. "The Aggregate Resources Act and its regulations require aggregate operators to pay fees and royalties related to the extraction of aggregate materials. Aggregate licence and permit holders must pay an annual fee that is used to offset the cost of delivering the program. Some annual fees (i.e., for licences on private land) are shared. Additionally, administration fees are also charged when submitting an aggregate application, for the transfer of a licence or permit or requesting a major site plan amendment.... Royalties are paid to the crown for use of crown-owned aggregate, unless exempted by the minister or by regulation. The minimum royalty is set in regulation but the rate may be increased based on the location, quantity, type and accessibility of the aggregate and its intended use."

Section 4, "Other proposed changes ...

"—new powers to modify the Aggregate Resources Trust agreement and establish performance reporting requirements in the future;

"—move specific requirements for application, amendments and reporting from the act to the regulations or standards;

"—consolidate all exemptions to the definition of 'rock' into one location;

"—new ability to establish performance reporting requirements in the future; and

"—new ability to establish certification and training programs in the future."

The blueprint outlined the general consensus among all stakeholders on how the legislation should be amended. Again, a little bit of disappointment; there's quite a bit of disappointment that there's more within the blueprint than there is in the actual legislation. Although we do see some of its content being used, the majority of the issues and proposed changes mentioned in the blueprint remain to be seen in this bill.

I do commend the bill for the increased fees, equalized fees and royalties between crown and private land. The blueprint did not address this primary concern amongst all stakeholders, which was the adequacy of the current licence fee structure. The blueprint did not include pro-

posals for revised fee structures, an issue that is of fundamental importance to the Aggregate Resources Act.

We know that without an adequate funding model, paying for the added program component and responsibilities would be next to impossible for an already busy ministry. It is unclear how the ministry would be able to effect and enforce the changes being proposed.

At this point in time, Mr. Speaker, I see your finger telling me that I now have half a second to finish the start to my one-hour lead. I will take your lead and start further debate when I have the privilege of rising once again and finishing off on this riveting and wonderful subject of the Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Algoma–Manitoulin. You will have more time left.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Since it is now 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

WEARING OF UNIFORM

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Nipissing on a point of order.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I'm looking for unanimous consent to once again allow me to wear my military uniform at 3 o'clock today to read a Remembrance Day tribute.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nipissing is seeking unanimous consent to wear his uniform as honorary colonel. Do we agree? Agreed.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you, Speaker. I seek unanimous consent for all MPPs to wear the purple ribbons that are on our desks today in honour of the London Abused Women's Centre's Shine the Light on Woman Abuse campaign, which is being launched this November 1.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from London West is seeking unanimous consent to wear the purple ribbons. Do we agree? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I would like at this time to introduce Janice Johnson, who's the chair of the Ontario Co-operative Association, and Luc Morin, the executive director of Ontario's francophone co-operative association. We had a co-operative breakfast this morning with many other people in the gallery, but I'll start with those two. Welcome back to Queen's Park. Thank you for being here.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Good morning. It's my pleasure to welcome the father of page captain Randy Ai, who will be joining us shortly. His name is Alex Ai, from the great riding of Pickering–Scarborough East. Congratulations to Randy on being page captain today.

Miss Monique Taylor: It gives me great pleasure to welcome a co-op from Hamilton named the Mustard Seed. From there we have Sean Crockett and Frank Quaranta. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael Chan: Good morning, Speaker. I want to introduce a school visiting from my riding of Markham–Unionville. I want to welcome, from Father Michael McGivney Catholic Academy, the grade 10 students and their teacher, Loretta, who are visiting Queen's Park today. Welcome.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to also welcome today back again the guests of page Elisabeth Lawton, her grandparents Nancy and Allan Lawton. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

Ms. Soo Wong: On behalf of our colleague the member from Scarborough Southwest, I'd like to welcome the guests of page captain Cooper Custance: his grandparents Pauline and Ted Custance and Fran and Don Brownrigg. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Well, it's going to be a repeat introduction, but it's a pleasure to welcome Ted Custance and Pauline Johnston, proud grandparents of page captain Cooper. I can tell you that Cooper has been doing a marvelous job from where I sit here in the Legislature.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I'd like to introduce two constituents from the great riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore: Miss Linda Leon and Miss Dijana Gavric. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Good morning, colleagues. I'm very happy to introduce a resident from Scarborough–Rouge River. His name is Dominic Carver. Welcome to Parliament.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Today it's my great pleasure to welcome a guest of page Bianca Morelli from my riding of Davenport. Bianca has her mother here. Dahlia Ferrari is visiting in the public gallery. Welcome, Mrs. Ferrari.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: On behalf of the co-chairs of the co-op caucus, the member from Oxford and the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, I would like to introduce all those individuals who attended another successful co-op breakfast. These individuals included the people from our caisses populaires, the CCO, On Co-Op, the Co-operators and Gay Lea Foods. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Un grand salut tout spécial à Luc Morin, Julien Geremie et Lucie Moncion.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions?

Would the members please join me in welcoming in the Speaker's gallery today the family of the late John Ferris, MPP for London South during the 30th Parliament, who are seated here: his daughter, Barbara Frijia; his sons, Rick and Chris; daughter-in-law Caroline; and

grandchildren Mark, Daniel, Lauren, Kathryn, Joseph and Mackenzie. We welcome them to hear the tribute to Mr. Ferris.

Also here is former parliamentarian and Speaker during the 35th Parliament, Mr. David Warner. Welcome.

JOHN FERRIS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to recognize the former member of provincial Parliament from London South, Mr. John Ferris, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to do a tribute. Do we agree? Agreed.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Speaker, I'm proud to pay tribute today on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party to John Ferris, who served as the member for London South from September 1975 to April 1977. Although I never met John, I have developed a healthy respect for this lifelong public servant.

We are joined by John's children, Barbara, Rick and Chris; daughter-in-law Caroline; and some of his grandkids: Mark, Daniel, Lauren, Kathryn, Joseph and Mackenzie. Welcome.

John was not just a member of his community; John was a leader and a participant in his community. A London native, John attended Catholic Central High School and worked at London Life.

John was a man of faith. He was a Fourth Degree Knight of Columbus, a member of Alhambra, on the Monsignor Feeney Foundation, and an active parishioner in the St. George parish community.

He was also well connected in the community. If anything was going on, he would be the one to know about it. I spoke to Paul Whitehead, who served with John as a trustee for a number of years. To paraphrase what Paul told me, John would be the equivalent of today's LinkedIn. He knew everybody.

John's calling in politics began in 1971 when he sought to obtain a seat on the London Board of Education. His reason for running was fear for the future of Catholic education. His main concern was what would happen to his kids if separate schools were to be discontinued.

He made a difference, and in 1975 became the first Catholic to chair the London public school board, at a time when Ontario did not fund Catholic high schools. Later that year, John made the jump to provincial politics. At a time when the PCs held a majority for a number of decades, Bill Davis was the Premier, and it was "BJB"—before Jim Bradley.

John made it clear in his nomination that the issues locally were just as important as they were provincially. He campaigned on local autonomy, education policy and the financial mismanagement of the government of the

day. The administration costs in the provincial education budget were increasing four times as fast as the expenses of local boards.

He won the nomination for the Liberal Party in August that year and was elected in the fall. The PC Party was reduced to a minority government.

John served—no surprise—as the education critic under Liberal leader Bob Nixon. John believed that the three Rs were the backbone of learning and that basic subject courses should be compulsory.

He believed in public participation and ensured at the time, as school board chairman and as MPP, that the people were involved.

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After his term as MPP, John returned to the London Board of Education. In 1985, he was elected to the London and Middlesex Roman Catholic Separate School Board. In 1986, he made history by becoming the first London-area person to be elected chair of the public and separate education systems. He served five times as chair and retired as trustee in 2010.

The legacy that John has left in politics is what many of us here today aspire to attain. Anybody I spoke to could not say a bad word about him. The current chair of the London District Catholic School Board, Bill Hall, stated that, “John Ferris was one of the hardest-working trustees in Catholic education. For more than 30 years he was an advocate, a spokesperson and a champion. The Ferris family has been an important part of the Catholic community. He was a role model for me personally and I sought his advice on many occasions.”

And back to Dr. Paul Whitehead, who said, “I knew John for over 40 years. John was always the person who could talk with you even when he vehemently disagreed with you. He never held grudges or thought about what happened in the past but focused on the now and future. He was an authentic consensus-builder.” John retired in 2010, but through his 40 years in public service, he never wavered on his commitment to Catholic education.

Barbara, Rick and Chris are here today. They were 15, 12 and 10 when their father came to Queen’s Park, and it could not have been easy on the family with the amount of time John would have to focus here in Toronto. But on behalf of the PC Party, we thank you for sharing your father with Queen’s Park. We want to thank John for the influential role he played as an MPP and in shaping our educational system.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I rise today on behalf of the NDP caucus to recognize the deep commitment to public service that marked the life of former London South MPP John Ferris. I last saw John in September 2013, two years before his passing and only a month after my election as MPP. It was at the official opening of St. André Bessette Catholic Secondary School, a celebration that epitomized everything that mattered to John in his work as both MPP and school board trustee: his passion for education, his love of community and his strong Catholic faith.

He arrived that day with his walker and joined the many who had gathered to dedicate the school and to welcome the first cohort of students. John and I had met a couple of times before as trustees on our coterminous boards, but we did not know each other well. I will always remember, however, with fondness how John made a point of seeking me out while offering warm words of congratulations and encouragement on my new role.

This was the kind of man John was: generous, welcoming and always positive in his approach. He was that rare politician who garnered the respect of everyone, even those who did not agree with him. He was a man of principle who knew what his values were and acted on them, who did not shy away from discussion of difficult issues even when they led to heated debates. A lifelong Londoner and graduate of Catholic Central High School, John began his 39-year political career as an advocate for Catholic education, deciding that the best way he could ensure the educational system he wanted for his own three children was to get involved himself.

Prior to full funding for Catholic schools, Catholic trustees served on public school boards. In 1971, John became one of two Catholic trustees elected to the London Board of Education. Just four years later, John made history by becoming the first Catholic trustee to chair the London board, a remarkable testament to the trust that those around him placed in his leadership and the respect he had earned. Trustees who served with him described him as a mediator and a problem-solver who always put the needs of students first. He was open and collegial with his colleagues and went out of his way to support new trustees while they were learning the ropes.

In addition to his keen interest in education policy, John was an avid follower of public affairs, and in 1975 he decided to throw his hat into the ring as the Liberal candidate for London South. Although the riding had been a Conservative stronghold for decades, John’s knowledge of provincial issues and his hard work in that campaign led to his winning an upset victory over the Tory incumbent. He joined the Liberal caucus at Queen’s Park and fittingly became the party’s education critic, bringing his experience on the school board to provincial debates and his dedication to his constituents to the riding he represented.

Two years later, another election saw the riding of London South return to Tory blue. John followed his passion and returned to the public school board, where he was elected a second time as board chair. Later, when the London and Middlesex Roman Catholic Separate School Board was formed, John made history yet again by becoming the first London-area person to be elected chair of both the public and the separate school systems. John continued to serve as trustee until his retirement in 2010.

Throughout his time as a committed public servant, John found numerous other ways to contribute to the community. He was an active volunteer, involved with Western Fair, the Knights of Columbus, the Monsignor Feeney Foundation and his own St. George parish.

Sadly, John passed away on September 27, 2015, and was mourned by his many family members and friends.

His long-time colleague London District Catholic School Board Chair Bill Hall remembers John as one of the hardest-working trustees in Catholic education, an advocate, a spokesperson and a champion for more than 30 years.

John was survived by his wife, Joan, to whom he was married for 56 years. He is also survived by his daughter, his two sons and his eight grandchildren, many of whom are attending here today. We welcome his daughter, Barbara, his sons Rick and Chris, his daughter-in-law Caroline and some of his grandchildren, Mark, Daniel, Lauren, Kathryn, Joseph and Mackenzie.

In his life, John held seats on two school boards and another seat in the Ontario Legislature. He dedicated 39 years of his life to serving the public and he did it with passion and conviction. All MPPs, but especially those of us who served as trustees, understand what we have lost. It is an honour for me to recognize his contribution to public education, to the province of Ontario and to his community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tribute? The Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development, digital government and the member from London Centre North.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: London North Centre, Speaker, but that's pretty good.

I am very honoured to be representing the Liberal Party in this tribute to John Ferris. He was an extraordinary man, and while he was here only a short period of time, the impact that he had in London and beyond was enormous.

His passion, of course, was education, and we've heard a lot about that from both previous speakers. He showed incredible dedication to the things in life that he loved. He spent 39 straight years involved in politics and community leadership, a man of true, true dedication.

He was married to Joan for 56 years. Sadly, Joan passed away just a few months after John did last year.

When people talk about John, they talk about education. John Ferris and education are synonymous. It was his passion. In 1971, as we heard, he was elected as a Catholic trustee to the public school board. I think it's interesting for people who maybe don't remember those days before full funding. Every public school board had two elected Catholic trustees. In an even more remarkable tribute to him, he, a Catholic—in those days it mattered—was elected as the chair of the public school board, a first in history. Interestingly, he was elected after three tie votes. They drew straws and he was selected by a straw draw.

The fact that he was elected spoke volumes about his character. He was a consensus-builder, a consensus-maker. People trusted him to do what was right.

Shortly after he was elected chair, he ran in 1975 in London South. That was an interesting election. No one in this House was actually in the House then and served with John Ferris. It was an election that occurred before Jim Bradley started as an MPP. I know a lot of people around here actually think that Jim Bradley came with

the building, but in fact there was a pre-Bradley era, two years "BB," before Bradley. That election brought a big shakeup to this Legislature—46 new members. In doing a little homework for this, I found an article written by Sylvia Stead in the *Globe and Mail*. The headline is, "Jubilant Liberals Sweep to Three Victories in Conservatives' Old London Stronghold." It talks about the three new members from London: John Ferris, of course; Marvin Shore, who has had fame because of his son—David Shore was the producer of the TV show *House*. He was a member here part of the time as a Liberal. It also talked about the election of David Peterson, age 31, dressed in a white suit and red carnation.

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The article goes on to talk about the election of John Ferris, in the most surprising upset. John Ferris, 42, narrowly defeated Conservative John Eberhard in London South. Mr. Eberhard, age 30—remember how young these members were—a former crown attorney, had oozed confidence in the election and always expected to keep John White's former riding in the hands of the Tories, but that in fact did not turn out to be.

The election of 1975—I'm just going to read a few of the names. As I say, 46 names: Marion Bryden, Sean Conway, Eric Cunningham, John Eakins, Evelyn Gigantes, Larry Grossman, Vince Kerrio, George McCague, Bob McKessock, Roy McMurtry, Keith Norton, Hugh O'Neil, Julian Reed, Stuart Smith, Betty Stephenson, Mel Swart, John Sweeney, David Warner, Bud Wildman and more. This was the class of 1975. You can see that there was a new wave of energy that came into this House.

John Ferris was part of that new wave of energy. He was appointed education critic, and if you look at his remarks during that time, you'll see that he was a champion not only for access, including special ed, but also for robust education quality.

One of the things he said that resonates today was, "The skills of the future may be different, but barring a breakthrough in mental telepathy, verbal and written communications will still be important." It's 40 years later. We may have invented Siri—telepathy, though, still eludes us. A government's dedication to fostering these skills is as relevant as ever.

John Ferris worked hard and served his constituents, but he was a passionate family member. His granddaughter Lauren describes him this way: "His own beliefs were clear, and he wasn't afraid to make it known when he thought something was wrong." Speaker, I think when we do these kinds of tributes, we remember that it's really what our grandkids think of us that is important in all of this.

We've heard about his involvement as a long-time employee of London Life; he was very involved in the Knights of Columbus—I always looked forward on Remembrance Day to see John Ferris marching with the Knights of Columbus in full regalia, proudly a member of that community—the Monsignor Feeney Foundation; the Western Fair Board; and very active in his St. George parish.

When people talk about John Ferris, they say he didn't hold grudges. People said he was a rare specimen who knew how to "disagree without being disagreeable." They say he didn't just occupy a seat, he did things, took action and showed leadership. John's granddaughter Lauren said he was someone who could talk to anyone.

His family connections, though, were most important to him. Lauren said he always made sure he was "up to speed" on how everyone in the family was doing. He would check in on them and wanted to know about their lives. She said, "He was the heart of the family, the connection that kept everyone together." He made sure that his family carried on strong values of community involvement and standing up for the ideas they had. "He taught us," said Lauren. "He taught us to fight for what we believe in and to go after what we want in life."

Speaker, he was a fine man.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their very thoughtful and heartfelt comments about John. We thank the family for the gift of John Ferris. As a token of our esteem and the way in which we hold our former members, the family will be provided with a DVD and a copy of the Hansard comments. We thank you once again for the gift of John.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Therefore, the tribute being completed, it is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, this is about trust, and my question is for the Premier. The people of Ontario put their trust in this government and in this Premier. The Premier put her trust in Pat Sorbara, her former deputy chief of staff. This staffer breaks the trust by allegedly bribing Andrew Olivier, promising him a government job in exchange for a political favour that benefitted the Ontario Liberal Party. Instead of distancing herself from the accused, the Premier rewards her in trusting Pat Sorbara with leading her next campaign.

Mr. Speaker, why does the Premier continue to place her trust in Pat Sorbara? Is it because Pat Sorbara does exactly what the Premier asks?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There has been an investigation, and I know the Leader of the Opposition knows that. At every stage of the investigation, we've cooperated fully, and we will continue to do so. I said in 2015, if any charges were laid as a result of the investigation, then Patricia Sorbara would step aside, and this will happen if charges are laid.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Media are reporting that Pat Sorbara, the CEO of the Ontario Liberal Party, will be charged with bribery from her time as the Premier's deputy chief of staff. She is

accused of bribing Andrew Olivier to step aside as a contestant in the Sudbury by-election.

Mr. Speaker, did the Premier order the current CEO of the Ontario Liberal Party to allegedly bribe Andrew Olivier during the Sudbury by-election—yes or no?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I am going to be listening very intently to the questions and the answers. I'm going to say two things.

First of all, it's very difficult for me to ask a side to keep quiet if I'm getting responses while the question is being put. I am asking that we treat this with sensitivity. I am going to listen carefully. If I get a sense that the member is making an accusation of abetting, that is not appropriate, and I will say so. It's dangerously close to that now. I will allow the question to be put, but I'm listening carefully to ensure that that does not happen.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I will say again that in 2015 I said that if any charges were laid as a result of the investigation, then Patricia Sorbara would step aside. If charges are laid, that will happen. I believe it to be true that if charges are laid, we all have a collective responsibility to let the matter be handled by a court of law under the presumption of innocence. That's the reality that we're confronting.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: I'm not getting an answer to this question. Pat Sorbara, now the CEO of the Ontario Liberal Party, told Andrew Olivier, "You've been directly asked by the leader and the Premier to make a decision to step aside...."

Pat Sorbara told him, "You're ... the third person I've ever heard" the Premier "even ask this of." Pat Sorbara has now been charged, according to the media, with bribery.

Mr. Speaker, who ordered the CEO of the Ontario Liberal Party, Pat Sorbara, to allegedly offer Andrew Olivier a bribe? I would appreciate an answer to a very straightforward question.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There has been an investigation that has occurred outside of this House, as it should. If there are charges laid, this matter will be handled in a court of law. It's our responsibility, under the presumption of innocence, to allow that matter to be dealt with in a court of law.

1100

I said in 2015 that if charges were laid, then Patricia Sorbara would step aside. If charges are laid, that will happen.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. The Premier has said she "had a conversation with Andrew Olivier," and that the Premier's closest political confidant, Pat Sorbara, had a conversation the next day.

This isn't about Pat Sorbara stepping aside, if charged; that should be a given. My question—and I will be very clear, crystal clear, again. Mr. Speaker, who ordered Pat Sorbara to allegedly offer Andrew Olivier a bribe? The House deserves an answer.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The Premier has been open with the Legislature, the media and the public about the allegations related to the Sudbury by-election. As the Premier said, and she's absolutely right, as the charges are laid, it will become our shared responsibility to allow those charges to be dealt with in a court of law, not in this House.

Speaker, we will continue to co-operate with the independent investigation. I also want to confirm that if any charges are laid, the matter will be handled by the Public Prosecution Service of Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier, and let me say it speaks volumes that the Premier refuses to answer these very direct questions. Pat Sorbara said to Andrew Olivier that "it's not a question of whether we know that you want it," the Premier is "asking you to agree to put that aside for now."

Media are reporting that Pat Sorbara will be charged with bribery, as she tried to get Andrew Olivier to give up his democratic right to run for office. Again to the Premier, who—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock. Please finish.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, directly to the Premier: Who ordered Pat Sorbara to allegedly offer Andrew Olivier a bribe? And if the Premier refuses to answer, that says everything.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think it's very clear, and Ontarians totally understand, that if there are any matters that are dealing with the court, it has to be dealt—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm trying to get a message to you that I want quiet.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: All legal matters must be dealt with in the court of law. This Legislature is not such a place. If any charges are laid, they will be dealt with in the courts by appropriate independent authorities. As I mentioned before, and I'll restate, if charges are laid, the prosecution will be conducted by the Public Prosecution Service of Canada, which is independent of the Ministry of the Attorney General.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier. Media are reporting that Gerry Lougheed may also be charged with bribery alongside Pat Sorbara, the CEO of the Ontario Liberal Party. During the investigation, it was revealed that Mr. Lougheed—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Chief government whip.

Mr. Patrick Brown: —told Mr. Olivier, "I come to you on behalf of the Premier." Who ordered Gerry Lougheed and Pat Sorbara to allegedly offer Andrew Olivier a bribe? If the Premier did not, simply say so. Not to answer is hiding information from the House. I want an answer, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: If charges are laid, the matter will be dealt with in a court of law, not in this Legislature. That is the appropriate place. I do remind the members that there is a rule in our standing orders dealing with sub judice, where we are instructed not to engage or inter-vene in matters that may be before the courts. If charges are laid, the matters will be dealt with in court. That's where it should be, and we should respect that.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. News broke this morning that the Premier's top aide, Patricia Sorbara, and Sudbury power broker for the Liberal Party Gerry Lougheed will be charged later today under the Election Act by the OPP. Charges stem from the alleged bribery of former Liberal candidate Andrew Olivier during last year's by-election for the riding of Sudbury.

Can the Premier confirm, in light of these pending charges, that she will ask Ms. Sorbara to step down as her campaign chair until all charges have been dealt with in their entirety?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have, I believe, done that a number of times already in the House today. I said in 2015 that if any charges were laid as a result of the investigation that has been ongoing, then Patricia Sorbara of course would step aside. This will happen if charges are laid.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The people of Ontario should be able to trust their government. Today, Ms. Sorbara will be facing charges that allege she used her position in the Premier's office to offer a bribe to a candidate to induce him not to run for office.

Will the Premier confirm that Ms. Sorbara will play no role in either the Premier's government or her election campaign until all charges have been completely dealt with?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will say again that at every stage, we have co-operated fully with the investigation that was ongoing. We will continue to do so. If any charges are laid, then Patricia Sorbara will step aside, as I said in 2015 would happen.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I really haven't got quite the specific response I'm looking for in terms of whether or not Ms. Sorbara will be asked to step aside completely from her role—any role whatsoever—in the government or the election campaign. That was the question. The Premier is not answering it.

It has been clear for some time that something happened in the Sudbury by-election that may very well

have broken the law. The Premier chose to deal with that not by asking the people at the time that were involved to step aside until the issue was resolved, but instead, by promoting the people involved to run not just a by-election but, most recently, an entire provincial election campaign.

Will the Premier admit today that it's not just protecting but promoting Pat Sorbara that was the wrong thing to do—not just protecting her, but promoting her—and that the people of Ontario deserve better leadership and better accountability than what this Premier has offered?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the Attorney General has said, if there are charges laid, there will be a court process. This matter will be dealt with in court.

Mr. Speaker, I have answered many, many questions on this issue, on the substance of this issue, both in the Legislature and in the public realm. There has been an investigation. We have co-operated with that investigation.

I said in 2015 that if there were charges laid, then Pat Sorbara would step aside from her roles. If there are charges laid, that's what will happen.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Did the Premier ask Ms. Sorbara or Mr. Lougheed to offer Andrew Olivier an alleged bribe to step aside, to allow the Premier's preferred candidate in the Sudbury by-election an uncontested nomination?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know the Attorney General will want to comment. I want to just say, to both the questions from the Leader of the Opposition and the questions from the leader of the third party, that I have answered many, many questions. I am on the record. You can look at the responses I have given both in this Legislature and in the public realm, outside of the House. I've been very clear about those answers.

At this point, I said in 2015 that if there were charges laid, then Patricia Sorbara would step aside from her roles. That will happen if there are charges laid. If there are charges laid, then there will be a court process that we all have a responsibility to let unfold, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to offer the leader of the third party the same advice I offered the Leader of the Opposition: Be very delicate and be very careful of not going over the line of making an assumption, please. The last one was close. I will ask you not to do that, please.

Carry on.

1110

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I don't think that anybody believes that Mr. Lougheed and Ms. Sorbara offered the alleged bribe to Andrew Olivier on their own, so can the Premier tell us, if it was not her directly, who in her office—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sorry. I'm going to ask the member to listen carefully. Even if you

say that it wasn't her, that implies that it was, so I'm going to ask the member to be very delicate about how she puts the question.

Finish, please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, this is a matter of public interest, and I have the right to ask the Liberal Premier what the heck happened in Sudbury. That's my job, Speaker. That is my job.

Interjections.

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

I would ask the member to simply—my request was to be cautious in how she put the question, to ensure that it was parliamentary. That's all I'm asking. If the member chooses to continue to challenge that, I'll have to deal with it. I'm asking the member to be cautious of what she puts as a question in this House.

There are rules that you need to follow. You were close. I mentioned it. Now I'm asking the member to put the question in a way that is parliamentary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. There are laws that should be followed in this province as well, I have to say.

I guess my question simply is: Who is the person who pulled the trigger when it came to asking for this alleged bribe to take place?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, the Premier has been very open and transparent to this Legislature, to the media and to the public about the allegations that are related to the Sudbury by-election. Whether or not a law is broken—that is exactly what our courts are for. A judge is the person who makes that determination, based on the evidence that's presented to them, not this Legislature.

That's why I think we should respect the shared responsibility that we all have in terms of respecting the presumption of innocence and ensuring that a court should be able to do their job. It would be highly inappropriate for these types of questions to be asked in this House.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Now that charges are going to be laid today, the Premier has a chance to do the right thing and make clear the Premier's role, if there was one, and the role that anyone else in her office may have played in Sudbury in December 2014. Will she do that?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think the Premier has been very clear on the steps that she plans to take if charges are laid. I think that stands on the record. She has been clear, going back to 2015.

As I stated earlier, I think it's highly inappropriate that we pursue this line of questioning because this matter may be, if charges are laid, before a court of law. I will restate again that if charges are laid, the matter will be dealt with independently from the Ministry of the Attorney General: through the Public Prosecution Service of Canada.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Premier. I warned the Premier that if she stood with Pat Sorbara, she'd fall with her. Not only did this Premier stand with her; she doubled down by arrogantly putting her in charge of the Liberal re-election campaign while under OPP investigation. That's an appalling lack of judgment, even for this arrogant and out-of-touch government.

Now we have to face having the Premier dragged further into this mess while the legal proceedings against her former deputy chief of staff and hand-picked re-election chair drag on. Speaker, will the Premier look beyond her own self-interest and preserve the integrity of the office she was sworn to uphold by stepping aside until these legal matters are dealt with?

Interjections.

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

Mr. James J. Bradley: What nerve.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Chief government whip, second time.
Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: No, Mr. Speaker, I will not do that. I have been very clear in all of my answers earlier on the substance of this matter. I have been very clear in the co-operation that we have undertaken with the investigation. I was very clear in 2015 that if there were charges laid, Patricia Sorbara would step aside. If charges are laid, that is what will happen. At that point, this matter will be before the courts and, under the presumption of innocence, I think it is all of our responsibility to let that court process unfold.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the Premier. That's not acceptable, Speaker. The Premier may have escaped charges herself, but her hands aren't clean, far from it. These pending legal proceedings cast a dark shadow over her office and this entire government. This isn't a dispute—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Again, first of all, let me make this clear. This line of questioning is appropriate in this House. How it's done is what we're talking about, so I don't want anyone to say this is not appropriate to ask. I want to make sure that the opposition has their opportunity to say so. I'm asking that you consider clearly the type and how you ask the question.

The member was dangerously close to doing the same thing I admonished people for before. It stops. I don't want that done. You can do the question in the manner that is parliamentary. Please continue.

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, this isn't a dispute over policies or political philosophy. These unprecedented charges under the Election Act reach right into the heart of the Premier's office and our democratic system. The Premier must know she was wrong then not to cut Pat Sorbara loose, and now Ontarians rightfully demand and deserve accountability from her. If she stands with them, Speaker, she will fall with them, Speaker.

Will the Premier finally accept responsibility, admit she was wrong and step aside until the legal system deals with Pat Sorbara?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, if charges are laid, the matter will be dealt with by the court of law. The Premier remains focused on the job that the people of Ontario gave her. The Premier is focused on building Ontario up. The Premier is focused on building schools in our communities across this province. The Premier is focused on building hospitals across this province. The Premier is focused on creating jobs for Ontarians across this province.

We are investing in infrastructure, we're building public transit—that is what the Premier's mandate is and she is working day and night, every single day. We support her, and we'll continue to work with her, in that endeavour.

Interjections.

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

ONTARIO PLACE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Yesterday the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport angrily denied that there were any plans to sell off Ontario Place. But the fact is that, buried in the Premier's new 158-page omnibus bill, there's a clause that clearly allows for the sell-off of Ontario Place. The minister even admitted to the media: "It's there, I don't know why it's there, it's there."

Yes, Speaker, it's there. Why is it there?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: I appreciate this opportunity to clarify, and I thank the member opposite for his question.

We recognize on this side of the House that Toronto's waterfront should be for everyone to enjoy. That's why I can state clearly that Ontario Place will remain in public hands. It is not for sale.

We are moving forward with a plan to revitalize Ontario Place into a vibrant waterfront destination that engages Ontarians young and old and, indeed, all Canadians. We made it clear during the 2014 election, and I'll make it clear again: Developments like condos and casinos are not part of that plan.

I look forward to more in the supplementary, but I'll just say this: These amendments to the legislation are going to make that revitalization process easier and more effective. On this side of the House, we understand the opportunity to give businesses the tools that they need to have this conversation, unlike the member opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My, my. My, my.

Speaker, the existing law already allows Ontario Place to offer all the services, all the public benefits that the minister has talked about, but one thing the existing law doesn't allow is the sell-off of Ontario Place. The Premier insisted over and over that she wouldn't sell off Hydro One, and then she did. Now she insists she won't sell off Ontario Place, even though she's tabled legislation to allow exactly that.

1120

Why should anyone trust the Premier when she says she's not going to sell off Ontario Place?

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: Speaker, I always appreciate—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, come to order. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order.

Finish, Minister.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: Thank you, Speaker. I always appreciate the opportunity to rise in this House and clarify statements by those members on the other side of the House, and this is a crystal-clear opportunity. Let me make it perfectly clear in case the member opposite missed it the first time: Ontario Place is not for sale.

But I will tell you this: We are enormously excited about the opportunities inherent in revitalizing Ontario Place. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because we understand that it is a jewel to the people of this province. That is why, in 2014, our Premier made it abundantly clear that it's going to remain that way. I'm proud of that because it's going to see Ontario Place vital and open and accessible to all Ontarians. That is the work that we are doing on this side of the House.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Our government is moving forward with an ambitious plan to combat climate change and help make Ontario an economic leader in transitioning to a low-carbon economy. Through the climate change action plan, we will be transparently investing proceeds back into programs and initiatives that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and assist households and businesses.

The CCAP creates a foundation on which Ontario will develop the policies needed to provide more choices to families and businesses on ways to become more energy-efficient and help fight climate change. We're taking action now to kick-start climate change action by supporting initiatives such as energy retrofits and improving energy efficiency in social housing developments.

Can the minister please inform the House of the details of that announcement?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I also want to give a shout-out to the member from Barrie, because Barrie and London, Ontario, are the two cities in our province pioneering net-zero homes, where you can actually buy a net-zero home.

For the rest of Ontario, the Premier and I and the Minister of Energy were out in the MPP for Davenport's riding, visiting a home that's already benefiting from the \$100-million investment we made with our energy partners that has reduced the cost of their home by 42%: a 42% reduction in their home heating and energy costs. That is unprecedented.

Over the next decade—over the next five years, actually—we will invest \$8 billion in reducing energy and transportation costs and fighting emissions. As a matter of fact, this single action reduces GHGs in Ontario by 1.6 million tonnes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you to the minister for the answer. It's clear from announcements like the home energy audits that Ontario will be well positioned to meet the challenge of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

In early October, the federal government announced their carbon pricing framework. We were pleased that the framework allows provinces to choose cap-and-trade.

Recently, the Leader of the Opposition wrote to the federal government on his party's approach to carbon pricing. I know that the Leader of the Opposition was a big part of the Stephen Harper government that did everything it could to obstruct meaningful discussions and actions in combating climate change. Could the minister please inform the House why our government's policy is better than the one being suggested by the Leader of the Opposition?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: First off, a cap-and-trade system drives out the lowest, most cost-effective reductions on its own. It's extraordinarily effective.

We're not alone in this position. By March of next year, 60% of the world's economy will be covered by a cap-and-trade system—60%. And we're locked into a system that actually reduces emissions and promotes trade.

The Leader of the Opposition's system of a revenue-neutral carbon tax would mean that the price would have to be well over \$50, four or five times what ours is, and it would raise energy costs dramatically. It also misses that.

The program that the Premier and I and the MPP for Davenport and the Minister of Energy announced the other day would be eviscerated, because he wouldn't have the \$8 billion. He would leave Ontario businesses, homeowners, our senior citizens and families bereft of resources to buy any electric vehicle—

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

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, the Premier can try to stand here this morning and claim she didn't know anything about what her deputy chief of staff and local operative in Sudbury were up to, but nobody's buying it. On something this important, she had to know.

In fact, she boasted in a Toronto Star article in September that nothing happens in her office without her

knowledge. The Premier then told the Star, “When there’s a major change in our office—or when there’s a policy decision—I know about that decision. And I authorize it or not.”

“I know” and “I authorize”: her words. Speaker, when did the Premier know about and when did she authorize the offer made to Andrew Olivier?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Again, that was extremely close. Because it’s making an accusation to an individual member, under the circumstances I’ve described previously, I will tell the member that if that comes close to being done again, I will pass the question and provide the Premier with an option not to answer. I’m asking for your co-operation on how you put the question.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would ask the member from Lanark to pay attention while I’m speaking.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, again, the Premier has been very open to the public, to this Legislature and to the media on the allegations as they relate to the Sudbury by-election. The Premier is not going to answer questions that should be dealt with in a court of law. This is not that place. That’s why there’s a rule that exists in this Legislature that deals with when there are matters that may be under investigation or before the courts, that they not be dealt with in the Legislature.

The member opposite can spend as much of his time asking as many questions as possible. The Premier will remain focused on her job, and that is to build Ontario up, and that is to make sure that the everyday lives of Ontarians are getting better and better every single day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the Premier. There is no running from this for the Premier. This unprecedented scandal and the Election Act charges are directly connected to the Premier’s office.

Right now there are two by-elections under way in Ontario. With the scandalous actions in Sudbury the subject of new charges today, voters in Ottawa–Vanier and Niagara West–Glanbrook naturally have concerns. They see a Premier who defended someone under investigation for Election Act breaches out campaigning for votes.

In fact, the Premier attempted to interfere in the investigation by suggesting at a February 7 press conference that “We don’t expect that to happen,” regarding charges against Pat Sorbara. Reports now say that she will be charged.

Speaker, with these Election Act charges linked to her, does the Premier think it’s appropriate for her to be involved in all of these campaigns?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, now the true nature of these questions comes through: They are all totally partisan in nature, because they are all talking about the by-elections.

Speaker, the Premier is the Premier of the province. She’s the leader of the Ontario Liberal Party, and she will continue to do the job that has been given to her.

The good people of Niagara West–Glanbrook and Ottawa–Vanier are going to make a decision based on the quality of the candidates who are before them and based on the record of this government: that is, to invest in our schools, in our hospitals, and to make sure that we’re investing in public structures, be it the GO train to Niagara or the building of the LRT in Ottawa. These are the issues that the people in those ridings are talking about. That is why they are going to support the Liberal candidates in those ridings.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I was—

Interjections.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, I was disappointed to see that neither the Premier nor the minister appreciate the true severity and seriousness of the circumstances surrounding Mr. Adam Capay.

Mr. Capay is a 23-year-old man who has been detained in solitary confinement for four years in a jail in Thunder Bay, with 24-hours-a-day artificial light. A growing number of experts have referred to these conditions as meeting the definition of torture. This is extremely serious.

The minister made it clear that the circumstances around Mr. Capay were specific to Mr. Capay and unique to his cell and his circumstances. Was it also abundantly clear in the 25 reports that the minister received about Mr. Capay that those conditions were unique to him? If so, why didn’t the government act to change this?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the minister will want to comment. I just want to respond to the member to say that I have been very clear that this is a serious situation. I’ve been very clear that the status quo is not acceptable, and that what happened in the situation with Adam Capay is unacceptable.

But we have to understand what the circumstances are, which is why the minister has announced that we will be doing a review and that the whole issue of segregation needs to be looked at. We’ve already changed some of the rules in terms of the weekly review and the amount of time, but there needs to be a full review.

It’s a very serious issue. There is no one on this side of the House who would argue otherwise.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, what’s also troubling is that the previous minister must have also received reports about this circumstance, and he did nothing about it.

Mr. Capay, like far too many people in our jails—the increasing problem is that he was not tried or convicted of anything. It’s clear that there is a crisis in our court

system, in our correctional service system, in our community release and our bail program. Everyone can see it. It's obvious. It's something that everyone knows about.

We don't need another review. We need action now. We need the government to do something now. What is this government going to do to ensure that Mr. Capay receives justice and that there are no other Adam Capays in any of our jails in this province?

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

Hon. David Oraziotti: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. This is a serious issue, as the member pointed out, and we take this issue very seriously. After becoming aware of this particular issue, I immediately requested that ministry officials inform me of any circumstances across the province, in any of our institutions, where there were these types of similarities with respect to lighting or any other conditions under which an individual is being held in segregation.

Mr. Capay is in a different cell with very different conditions today. We've taken action on that. We are obviously seized with this issue and the reliance—the over-reliance, frankly—on segregation in our system. It is a systematic challenge, and we are working to resolve that.

We've also indicated that we are committed to a full, independent third-party review of our correctional system so that we can make the investments that we all want to see in our system.

CO-OPERATIVE CORPORATIONS SOCIÉTÉS COOPÉRATIVES

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. This morning I attended an all-party co-op caucus to learn more about the co-operative movement in Ontario.

As many of you know, co-ops operate across the province and engage in a variety of activities, from housing to credit unions to child care and a great deal more. From the Aron Theatre and Empire Cheese in Trent Hills to Sunshine Heights Daycare in Port Hope to Bayshore Credit Union in Quinte West, co-operatives play an important role in the everyday lives of people in Northumberland–Quinte West and, indeed, across the province.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister inform this House about the important and innovative role that co-ops play in the lives of the citizens of Ontario?

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: I want to say thank you to the member from Northumberland–Quinte West and also several other members of this Legislature who attended the all-party co-op caucus this morning. I would also like to thank the other co-chairs, the member from Oxford and the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, for their involvement.

Co-ops play a vital role across the province, especially in many small and remote communities. One example of a community that has benefited from a co-op is Moonbeam in northern Ontario.

The owner of the local grocery store was getting older and thinking about retiring. He could not run the store anymore. However, he could not find a buyer for his grocery store. Instead of closing, the community stepped up and created a co-op. This co-op now runs the grocery store and provides a vital service to Moonbeam.

Co-ops are integral to communities like Moonbeam and to our province as a whole.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I would like to thank the minister for her answer and for her continuing work on this matter.

As the minister noted, co-ops are incredibly important to communities across the province and have a special place in northern and rural areas. The all-party co-op breakfast showcased the wide range of co-ops, from small businesses in Moonbeam to large co-ops like Gay Lea Foods and Mountain Equipment Co-op.

The co-op caucus took note of the tremendous social benefits co-operative corporations bring to their communities. Mr. Speaker, can the minister inform the House of her mandate commitment to co-operatives across Ontario?

L'hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Merci encore au député de Northumberland–Quinte West pour son implication dans le mouvement.

The mandate letter I received as Minister of Government and Consumer Services underscores our government's commitment to the co-operative sector in Ontario.

In 2017, I will modernize co-operative corporation registration and help ensure that co-ops can grow and thrive in communities across the province.

I look forward to many more co-op caucus meetings and to working with my co-chairs to fulfill my mandate commitment.

De plus, je voudrais offrir mes plus sincères félicitations à M^{me} Lucie Moncion, présidente et chef de la direction de l'Alliance des caisses populaires de l'Ontario et des Coopératives et mutuelles du Canada, comme étant l'une des récipiendaires. Comme nouvelle sénatrice, elle devient notre nouvelle chef fédérale pour les coopératives.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. The Associate Chief Justice Douglas Cunningham of Ontario Superior Court has written: "Appointments to government offices ... are not to be traded for political favour." He went to say, "They are appointments that must be made in a fair, open and transparent manner."

Well, the CEO of the Ontario Liberal Party is about to be charged for trying to trade a job for political favours, so I ask the Premier: When did the Premier know, or did the Premier know, that Pat Sorbara would be offering Andrew Olivier a job in exchange for stepping aside in the Sudbury by-election?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, the opposition can continue to ask the same question again and again. The

answer is not going to change: If charges are laid, these are the types of matters that should be dealt with in a court of law and not in this Legislature.

I ask the members again to focus on issues that are important to Ontarians, to focus on issues that ensure that their lives get better every single day. Let's focus on issues that the Premier is working on; that is, to create jobs for Ontarians. We as a province are growing. We as a province have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country. We are making sure that we have a robust climate change action plan. These are the kinds of things that are important to Ontarians, and the Premier and the government will remain focused on them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the Premier. Premier, I don't think it's doing you any good to hide behind your House leader. The people of Ontario want to hear from you. The allegation is that you told Pat Sorbara to allegedly bribe Mr. Olivier—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to ask the member to withdraw and restate his question.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I would ask—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Withdraw, and then try to re-ask the question. Thank you.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I withdraw.

Well, I'll simply ask, Mr. Speaker, through you: Who ordered Pat Sorbara to allegedly bribe Andrew Olivier in the Sudbury—was it you, Premier?

Interjections.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Two things: the chief government whip is now warned, and the second thing is, I'm going to ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

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

Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I'm speaking in this House as the Attorney General of the province, as the chief crown law officer of the province, to advise all the members that it is our shared responsibility to not engage in matters that may be before the courts. The courts are independent bodies, and we should respect their authority to engage in these matters and to ask the kind of questions that the opposition is asking. This is not the place to do it. That's why we have a sub judice rule in our standing orders to warn us and advise us exactly what not to engage in, Speaker. The Premier has been open to the public and to the Legislature and she will remain transparent, but she won't discuss things that may be before the courts.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Last week, her health minister said that Ontario's long-term-care homes have the most robust oversight and accountability measures in the world. But this week, an Ottawa family is asking how their 89-year-old mother,

who lives in a for-profit long-term-care home, could end up with a maggot infestation in her leg wound. The family was horrified, and I think everyone who hears of this story is going to be horrified.

Ottawa police are now investigating the for-profit nursing home where she lived. It begs the question: If Ontario has the best oversight of long-term care in the world, how could this happen to any resident in any one of our long-term-care homes?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I too was horrified and disgusted when I learned of this incident in an Ottawa nursing home, Mr. Speaker. We have zero tolerance for abuse or neglect. Immediately upon my ministry receiving a critical incident report, my ministry took immediate action. We have investigated the situation in this long-term-care home. We will be issuing a public report. That report will be out in the coming days.

It is absolutely unacceptable that a resident of a long-term-care home experienced this poor level of care. When my ministry was informed of this situation, as I mentioned, last month, we immediately ordered a critical incident investigation. We've worked with the home to establish a plan. I'll continue with this in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Last week, the health minister said that there is zero tolerance for abuse or neglect of long-term-care residents. He said it again just now, Speaker. And that's exactly the right standard to have. So when an 89-year-old woman is sent to hospital with a maggot-infested leg wound, it raises serious questions that need to be answered. The Ministry of Health says that they've already inspected the home and developed a "voluntary plan of correction." But a voluntary plan in one home will not fix the ongoing, significant problems in our long-term-care system in this province.

I asked the Premier the same question last week. I'm going to ask her again today: When will she launch a full review or inquiry into the oversight and staffing levels of our nursing homes in this province?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: As I was saying, immediately when we were informed of this incident, we launched an investigation. We performed an inspection in the nursing home in question in Ottawa. Out of this investigation, we are working with the home to establish a plan of correction. We've established a plan of correction that strictly lays out our expectation for resident wound care, Mr. Speaker. We're taking this extremely seriously, as we do all of our critical incidents. As with all of our investigations—the 100% of long-term-care homes that we do oversee, that we would inspect annually—the investigation report will be publicly posted within the next month.

Mr. Speaker, the safety and well-being of our seniors is my highest priority, and I work every day to ensure that that oversight is as robust as it possibly can be. We're taking this incident very seriously.

CHILD CARE

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question this morning is for the Associate Minister of Education for early years and child care.

Ontario communities continue to grow, including my riding of Davenport. Many young families are today calling Davenport home, which means the demand for affordable, accessible, flexible and quality child care continues to grow.

As a mother of two young children, I know how important it is to have safe, quality child care as well. I've had the opportunity to speak with many of my constituents who are young parents and soon-to-be parents who say it can be challenging to find licensed child care spaces.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, how is the government helping Ontario families with their child care needs?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I want to thank the hard-working member from Davenport for the question. I know she's a strong advocate for affordable child care in her riding.

Our children deserve to get the best start in life, and our government recognizes that access to high-quality, affordable licensed child care is extremely important. That's why we committed \$120 million in the 2015 budget to create 4,000 new licensed child care spaces in Ontario.

We want to give families the support they need. In fact, just recently, I was pleased to announce over \$30 million to build 48 new child care rooms that will result in 821 new licensed child care spaces across the province. This is wonderful news, and it sends a clear message of our commitment, ahead of schedule, to ensuring that families and our government get results.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you to the minister for that answer. I thank her, as well, for the great work that she is doing to ensure that our youngest and brightest do have a bright future here in Ontario.

I'm glad to know that our government has been working hard to create an additional 4,000 child care spaces in Ontario. We know that investments in high-quality, affordable child care have many positive effects on our province as a whole. By investing in child care, we can help Ontario families while also reducing poverty and the gender wage gap.

I'm proud of this government's past investments in child care and its strong future commitment to creating even more spaces. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, what is the government doing to strengthen Ontario's child care system in the long term?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to answer the member's question, and I want you to know that I've had several conversations with the member about child care in her riding. She is really a strong advocate for her riding.

I'm proud of the achievements we've made to strengthen the early years and child care system, but we

know there is more work to be done. We continue to build an early years and child care system that is high-quality, seamless and meets the needs of parents and children.

Starting in 2017, Ontario will help to create an additional 100,000 new licensed child care spaces over five years, for infants, toddlers and preschoolers. This is a historic investment, and it is one that will completely transform the way child care is delivered in this province. We will double the current capacity for zero to four-year-olds in licensed child care. It will help people in their everyday lives by promoting early learning and development while helping more parents find the care they so urgently need.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Premier, and the Premier alone. On February 27, 2015, the Premier said that Pat Sorbara was facing allegations she does "not believe to be true." She said opposition members were "unfair to individuals and to their families, no matter who they are or what party they belong to."

The Toronto Star is now reporting that Pat Sorbara will be charged today. Mr. Speaker, are the opposition questions about the actions of her staff still unfair and does the Premier still believe the allegations are untrue?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

1150

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The matters are allegations, and just that, until they're proven in the court of law. The Legislature is not that court of law, so I just advise the members again to respect the rules that exist in the standing orders. Any matters, if charges are laid, will be handled in our court system.

The Premier has been transparent and open to Ontarians and to this Legislature on this issue, and the Premier will remain focused on the job that is most important to her: that is, to build Ontario up. We support her in that endeavour.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, these questions directly relate to the Premier's staff and her office. She has an obligation to answer those questions.

Back to the Premier: On that same day, the Premier said, "Pat Sorbara, particularly, is a seasoned professional and a woman of integrity." Reports say that Pat Sorbara will be charged today for bribery. Bribery and integrity don't normally go hand in hand.

Does the Premier stand by the integrity of her staff member who is being charged with bribery today?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, I think the Premier has made very clear the steps and the actions she will take if charges are laid. We've been very clear that if they are laid, the matter should be handled and will be handled in the court of law. It is our shared responsibility under the standing orders to respect that. We will continue to cooperate with that independent investigation.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: As I mentioned at the beginning of question period and as I will restate again, if there are charges laid, the matter will be handled independently by the Public Prosecution Service of Canada.

On this side of the House, on the government side, we remain focused on our job. That is to build Ontario up. We will continue to invest in our schools and our hospitals, and to create jobs for hard-working Ontarians.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is for the minister of correctional services. I've been asking this government to take—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Second time for the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Please put your question.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I've been asking this government to take action on the problems faced by Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre for years now. From overcrowding to lack of supports for correctional officers, this government has remained silent, and now one man is dead and another is in critical condition due to a drug overdose.

Unfortunately, the problems at EMDC are not isolated incidents. There have been multiple overdose deaths in several institutions, most recently five overdoses in Hamilton.

Minister, what does it take for this government to keep drugs from entering and killing inmates in our provincial jails?

Hon. David Oraziotti: I thank the member opposite for the question. What I can say to the member is that we're the first jurisdiction in this country that is putting full body scanners in our 26 institutions. In Hamilton, one is already operational—the member was referring to overdoses there. In London, there is not one operational yet, but there will be one.

What I can say is that there were two inmates that were taken to hospital. One individual passed away at the hospital. The ministry takes any death in custody very seriously. It's being investigated by the Office of the Chief Coroner, as well as the police.

We are continuing to make those important investments. In fact, at the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre, there are 72 additional staff since 2013. Mental health nurses and seven full-time nurses have been hired, 24-hour nursing coverage is in place, and it is helping to improve circumstances at this particular location.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Since 2007, there have been eight deaths at the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre located in London, and yet there's a continued failure on behalf of this government to implement the recom-

mendation of the coroner's juries, previously convened to review past deaths.

My question is: When is the government planning on implementing the past recommendations that have been issued by the coroner's juries, recommendations that may have saved the life of Jamie High and prevented this latest tragedy?

Hon. David Oraziotti: We are acting to do everything we can to ensure we reduce any type of contraband entering our jails. There are instances, obviously—and the member highlights that—where that is happening, but we are also the first jurisdiction in this country to put full-body scanners into our institutions.

We have invested in the Regional Intermittent Centre in London, in the member's area—\$9.3 million; 112 beds. I was there recently for the opening. That helps to significantly reduce contraband with individuals who are serving sentences on the weekend. We've added 72 staff, more nurses and 357 security cameras at this particular location. We're doing everything we can to make the investments in this area and reduce those types of incidents.

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

Mr. Granville Anderson: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. With our government investment of \$160 billion over the next 12 years, we are going to require the proper resources to help build Ontario up. Several of these materials come from aggregate pits, such as the one in my riding of Durham. While I know that building Ontario up is important, it is also important to recognize the need for consultation with the public, especially when it comes to aggregates.

Minister, can you tell us what steps the province is taking to balance the use of aggregates to build critical infrastructure in Ontario while ensuring that proper consultation has occurred?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: I'd like to thank the member from Durham for his question. Aggregate resources are vital to our province's economy and are used to build our roads, hospitals, schools and playgrounds. That's why my government is proud to have introduced Bill 39, the Aggregate Resources and Mining Modernization Act. If passed, this bill would create a modern regulatory framework that will help companies and communities use this important resource in vital infrastructure projects.

On this side of the House, we recognize the importance of listening to the people of Ontario. That's why, if passed, this bill would improve information on aggregate operations and enhance public participation by creating clearer processes to change existing approvals for a pit or quarry and allow for customized consultation plans on unique applications. We've consulted with the people of Ontario and have included provisions in this proposed legislation which will tackle the challenges they identified.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you to the minister for her answer. It is comforting to know that our government is not only committed to ensuring people in Ontario have access to the infrastructure they deserve, but also that they are consulted during every step of the process.

However, there are other concerns about the operation of aggregate pits that I was hoping the minister could address. I often hear concerns about environmental protection and accountability when discussing aggregate pits with my constituents, especially regarding the so-called mega quarries. I am curious how Bill 39, if passed, will affect the need for aggregate pits and the need to protect our environment, especially in my riding of Durham.

Can the minister tell me what the government is doing to ensure that there is environmental accountability when operating an aggregate pit?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: I'd like to thank the member for his question. He knows, as I do, that the 407 East extension in his riding is going to need an awful lot of aggregate to build.

As minister of MNRF, I've also been hearing about the concerns about the environmental impacts of an aggregate pit. One of the biggest concerns, and the incident which sparked our review, is the mega quarry that the member mentioned.

If passed, Bill 39 will create the flexibility for our ministry to create customized consultation requirements for applications that don't fit the standard size or requirements. This will allow us to put in place procedures to properly assess the impacts to groundwater sources when making decisions for new licences, and would also require existing sites to provide information related to the operation of a pit or quarry at the request of the ministry.

The proposed legislation shows that our government is dedicated to protecting our farmland, groundwater and environment.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Premier. The Premier has dodged questions this morning by hiding behind her House leader. The Premier's House leader says she's focused on important things. Well, I think bribery charges against the Premier's former deputy chief of staff and hand-picked Liberal CEO are pretty important, and I feel very confident in saying that Ontarians feel the same way.

Does the Premier agree that these unprecedented charges are important, and, if so, will she finally come clean and tell us her role in these bribery allegations?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just go back to what I said at the beginning of question period. This is a very important issue. There has been an investigation that has been ongoing. We have co-operated with that investigation, and we will continue to do so. I have answered questions in this Legislature and I have made statements outside of the Legislature on the substance of this issue.

I said in 2015 that if charges were laid, Pat Sorbara would step down. If charges are laid, that is exactly what will happen. I've been very clear about that.

My focus has to be primarily on the job that I was elected to do—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is never too late to receive a warning or be named.

Please finish.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —and that is serving the people of Ontario. I am focused on that and I remain convinced that building this province, whether it's in infrastructure or education or health care, is the most important focus of this government.

DEFERRED VOTES

PROMOTING AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA PROMOTION DU LOGEMENT ABORDABLE

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

Bill 7, An Act to amend or repeal various Acts with respect to housing and planning / Projet de loi 7, Loi modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois en ce qui concerne le logement et l'aménagement du territoire.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the motion for closure on the motion for second reading of Bill 7.

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

The division bells rang from 1202 to 1207.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would all members please take your seats.

On September 28, 2016, Mr. Ballard moved second reading of Bill 7, An Act to amend or repeal various Acts with respect to housing and planning.

Mr. Potts has moved that the question be now put.

All those in favour of Mr. Potts's motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

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

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hillier, Randy	Sattler, Peggy
Arnott, Ted	Horwath, Andrea	Scott, Laurie
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Smith, Todd
Barrett, Toby	MacLaren, Jack	Tabuns, Peter
Brown, Patrick	MacLeod, Lisa	Taylor, Monique
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Mantha, Michael	Thompson, Lisa M.
Clark, Steve	Martow, Gila	Vanthof, John
Coe, Lorne	McDonell, Jim	Walker, Bill
Fedeli, Victor	Miller, Paul	Wilson, Jim
Fife, Catherine	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Natyshak, Taras	Yurek, Jeff
Harris, Michael	Nicholls, Rick	
Hatfield, Percy	Pettapiece, Randy	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 48; the nays are 37.

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

Mr. Ballard has moved second reading of Bill 7, An Act to amend or repeal various Acts with respect to housing and planning. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1210 to 1211.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Ballard has moved second reading of Bill 7, An Act to amend or repeal various Acts with respect to housing and planning.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be noted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Hatfield, Percy	Murray, Glen R.
Anderson, Granville	Hillier, Randy	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hoggarth, Ann	Naqvi, Yasir
Arnott, Ted	Horwath, Andrea	Natyshak, Taras
Bailey, Robert	Hoskins, Eric	Nicholls, Rick
Baker, Yvan	Hunter, Mitzie	Oraziotti, David
Barrett, Toby	Jaczek, Helena	Pettapiece, Randy
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jones, Sylvia	Potts, Arthur
Bradley, James J.	Kiwala, Sophie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brown, Patrick	Lalonde, Marie-France	Rinaldi, Lou
Chan, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Chiarelli, Bob	MacCharles, Tracy	Sattler, Peggy
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd
Coe, Lorne	Malhi, Harinder	Sousa, Charles
Colle, Mike	Mangat, Amrit	Tabuns, Peter
Coteau, Michael	Mantha, Michael	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crack, Grant	Martins, Cristina	Taylor, Monique
Damerla, Dipika	Martow, Gila	Thompson, Lisa M.
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Vanthof, John
Dhillon, Vic	Mauro, Bill	Vernile, Daiene
Dong, Han	McDonell, Jim	Walker, Bill
Duguid, Brad	McGarry, Kathryn	Wilson, Jim
Fedeli, Victor	McMahon, Eleanor	Wong, Soo
Fife, Catherine	McMeekin, Ted	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milczyn, Peter Z.	Yakabuski, John
Fraser, John	Miller, Paul	Yurek, Jeff
Hardeman, Ernie	Moridi, Reza	
Harris, Michael	Munro, Julia	

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

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 85; the nays are 0.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Government House leader?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

CLERK OF THE ASSEMBLY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order: the Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Todd Decker to his new role as Clerk of the Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I, on the other hand, want to reserve judgement.

Laughter.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Hang on. I just want to see how he's going to break me in, that's all.

There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1215 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to welcome John Gignac, founder of the Hawkins-Gignac Foundation for CO Education. He's here today to mark the beginning of Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week. He's joined by Mary-Ellen Sheppard and Conrad Galambos. I'm happy to have them joining us here today to share the need for working carbon monoxide alarms. I want to thank them and welcome them to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you for your introduction. I happen to know Mr. Gignac, a former constituent of mine, and I welcome him to Queen's Park.

Further introductions?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me great pleasure to welcome here to Queen's Park today the grade 10 civics students from Bloor Collegiate Institute, with whom I had an opportunity to meet earlier this afternoon. I welcome them here to Queen's Park, along with their teachers Mr. Lush and Mrs. Barclay. Welcome, Bloor Collegiate Institute students.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LIONEL MURPHY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I rise today to read a poem written by Lionel Murphy, Legion branch 23, North Bay. He

wrote this Remembrance Day poem, but sadly, we lost Lionel just a month ago. He was 91 years old when he left us. His poem is called On This Great Day.

I wandered through the field today
A field of marble stone
So many young men laying there
Some stones are marked unknown

They gave their lives that we might live
The life we live today
Make sure the life they gave for us
Was not just thrown away

So many that have fallen
In battle lost and won
So many young lives taken
Before their lives began....

They fought for love
Not for fame
For love of country
They lit the flame

They died alone
Or in a crowd
For those that did so
Let's be proud....

And now they lay in far-off fields
Their duty done, the torch is passed
We must not let their memory lapse
And take the torch that they have passed

For if we fail to carry on
Our liberty may soon be gone
And many ... lives will bear the cross
Of liberty that we have lost.

SHINE THE LIGHT ON WOMAN ABUSE CAMPAIGN

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Today, MPPs are wearing purple ribbons to commemorate the seventh annual Shine the Light on Woman Abuse campaign, which takes place every November during Woman Abuse Prevention Month. The campaign was launched in 2010 by the London Abused Women's Centre and has spread to 30 communities across the province and the country. For the first time this year, Parliament Hill has joined the campaign, with the Peace Tower turning purple on November 15.

The campaign is more than just awareness-raising about the reality of men's violence against women. It is also a call to action. I can think of no better action than to provide those who have experienced violence with the time they need to heal and to get the support they need without jeopardizing their employment. We know that the financial security that comes with a job is absolutely

critical to enable abused women to feel they can leave a violent relationship.

I have a private member's bill that will provide up to 10 days of paid leave for workers who have experienced domestic or sexual violence so they can see a doctor, talk to a counsellor, relocate or deal with lawyers and police. The bill passed second reading unanimously on October 20 and has been endorsed by hundreds of organizations, unions, experts and individuals who are calling on this government to bring the bill forward for public input at the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

Speaker, this November, let's give Ontario women more than a purple ribbon. I urge this government to commit to making my bill a reality.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I'm proud to stand to talk about Minister Charles Sousa's visit to the city of Brampton this past week. Minister Sousa was in Brampton while Minister Matthews was in Milton to announce our expansion of post-secondary education in both of these cities.

I'm so proud to be a part of a government that has recognized the need for more post-secondary education. Being one of the top 10 fastest-growing cities in Canada right now, I think that Brampton is excited for this opportunity. We're excited that this university campus, or the partner that we search for, is going to have science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics as their focuses. These are the needs of students to create jobs for the future and to build innovation and structure for high-skilled jobs in the days to come.

Brampton is one of our fastest-growing communities, and this is why there is a call for this university proposal. We're so excited. Right now, our population of students between the ages of 18 and 24 is 50,400, and we anticipate it growing by up to 20% in the coming years. Bringing education to the city of Brampton will not only help us create jobs, build our economy and continue to invest in our province and our city, but it will also help us to continue to build Ontario up.

I'm so excited that Brampton has been given this opportunity, and I look forward to working with all of our partners to continue to build Ontario up.

CARBON MONOXIDE AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize the third annual Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week. This week was created by my bill, the Hawkins Gignac Act, which required Ontario homes with a fuel-burning appliance or attached garage to have a carbon monoxide detector. You cannot smell or taste carbon monoxide, so having a working alarm is the only protection against carbon monoxide poisoning.

I would like to commend the hard work of our fire and emergency response services in getting this important

message out in their communities. Later this week, I will be joining the Woodstock Fire Department in a ride-along to deliver free pizzas to customers with working CO alarms. I've also heard of the great work being done by departments across the province, such as the Chatham-Kent Fire and Emergency Services' C.H.I.R.P. program, where firefighters provide free home alarm checks to residents.

I would also like to recognize John Gignac, founder of the Hawkins-Gignac Foundation for CO Education and the uncle of Laurie Hawkins, whose family was tragically lost to carbon monoxide poisoning in their home in Woodstock. John has been instrumental in increasing awareness of carbon monoxide alarms across Canada.

If you haven't already, I encourage you to check your alarms and ensure that vents and chimneys are clear and that fuel-burning appliances are serviced.

Carbon monoxide is a silent killer, but when we raise awareness about its dangers and the importance of working alarms, we can protect our families and save lives. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I encourage them all to get one.

HOCKEY HELPS THE HOMELESS

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to talk about Hockey Helps the Homeless, which is a nationally registered charity that organizes one-day pro-am tournaments. Sports lovers, businesses and volunteers come together to address the affordable housing crisis in a meaningful way.

Over the weekend, I attended the Kitchener-Waterloo tournament, where upwards of \$155,000 was raised, with proceeds benefiting five local organizations that work with underserved populations. A courageous young woman named Jessica shared her story. The support she received and services she accessed through oneROOF Youth Services saved her life. The funding for oneROOF's two supportive housing units dried up last spring and the provincial government denied emergency funding, despite knowing that the program helped at-risk youth, stabilized their lives and built better futures by providing housing first.

Jessica was one of 10 youth who had nowhere to go but the street as a result of these closures. Jessica has struggled with mental health, spousal abuse and substance abuse, but she found solace and support at oneROOF—and we need to remember that four youths died on the streets of Kitchener-Waterloo in 2014. She asked us, "Could you put a dollar sign on helping youth transition out of homelessness?" Clearly this provincial government concluded that the price was too high. I was ashamed that our priorities were so out of line.

1510

Hockey Helps the Homeless tournament is possible because of countless volunteers who donate their time and energy to pull it off. I want to say a special thank you to Mel and Terry Barrie for their volunteer hours over the years. They are amazing people, and we have a courageous and generous community. Thank you very much.

CREATIVE VILLAGE STUDIO

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I was delighted to visit Creative Village Studio, a storefront artist gallery and studio space in my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, last month to present them with my Gem of Etobicoke–Lakeshore recognition award in honour of their outstanding community service.

Creative Village Studio offers art and photography classes as well as drop-in studio time for participants of all ages. Their vision is to provide a supportive place for artists with varying abilities in order to enrich their lives through creative expression. They have certainly brought this vision to life through their efforts.

Mr. Speaker, Community Living Toronto has supported thousands of individuals since 1948, helping them to find accessible and meaningful ways to thrive within the community, whether this is through working in a supported environment or participating in classes such as those with Creative Village Studio. This organization can boast of more than 1,000 volunteers who play an active role in helping to integrate persons with an intellectual disability more fully into our community.

Congratulations to Harold Tomlinson, the facilitator of Creative Village Studio, his staff, volunteers, and all of the program participants on achieving their Gem of Etobicoke–Lakeshore recognition award in honour of their outstanding community service.

Mr. Speaker, some of the artists from this program have actually been taken up by art galleries in downtown Toronto because of the quality of their work. Congratulations.

GODERICH CENOTAPH POPPY INSTALLATION

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: If you passed through Goderich this fall, you will have seen a beautiful array of 551 ceramic poppies, each one carefully placed on the lawn of the Goderich cenotaph to remember each soldier from Huron county who sacrificed their life during the First World War. It has been exactly 100 years since these 551 soldiers, all part of the 161st Battalion, marched the streets of Goderich before travelling overseas to fight in France.

This installation is an important reminder that we should never, ever take for granted our freedom and quality of life, because men and women paid the ultimate price. Therefore, we must remember, 365 days a year. But this installation, ladies and gentlemen, is also accompanied by positive messages. It brings with it uplifting stories about teamwork, volunteerism and a vibrant community spirit.

It takes a lot of people to carry out an extraordinary project like this. Thank you to the amazing Bonnie Sitter, a volunteer who suggested this special project for the 100th anniversary and who dedicated so much of her time and effort to the project. Thank you to local artist Ruth Anne Merner, who designed the poppies. Thank

you to the more than 100 volunteers who rallied together this summer to make every single poppy and place them on the cenotaph grounds. To Rick Sickinger, Huron county's cultural development officer, thank you for your outreach efforts that led to this installation, a work of art that has garnered both national and international recognition.

Lest we forget.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I rise today to bring attention to the dedicated education support staff working in my riding of Windsor West and throughout this province. They are the secretaries who are the gatekeepers to our schools, custodians who keep our schools clean and safe, our maintenance workers and IT employees, as well as campus ministers at Catholic schools. Students, parents and education workers alike know the value that these professionals bring to our schools each and every day.

In Windsor, support workers at the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board, represented by Unifor Local 2458, have been without a freely negotiated contract since 2012. They represent about 370 members throughout the area. Their last contract was forced upon them when the Liberal government imposed contracts on education workers through Bill 115. This is the same legislation that our court system deemed unconstitutional, and it continues to have repercussions on our education system to this day.

Speaker, I'm not at the bargaining table, but I will say that I hope a fair contract that respects these workers and the value they bring to our schools is reached as soon as possible. Education workers represented by Unifor Local 2458 have been on strike for 16 days now, and I would encourage parties on both sides to work to bargain an agreement that ensures our schools receive the vital services that support workers provide, as soon as possible.

ALDO BOCCIA

Mr. Mike Colle: I rise to pay tribute to Dr. Aldo Boccia, who passed away this Sunday at 7:30 a.m. Dr. Boccia was a giant in our community. He was an incredible philanthropist who travelled the world, raising money for children fighting polio. He was a proud member of Rotary International. He was the leading light behind Toronto Earls Court Rotary Club.

His wife, Peggy, who I'm sure is in tears today, will truly miss him, as we all will.

Dr. Boccia not only was a dental surgeon and a dentist who provided free service for a lot of people who couldn't afford to pay at a shop on Dufferin, but he also raised tens of thousands of dollars for Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital; St. Joseph's hospital, where he worked; Villa Charities; Rotary International. He raised all kinds of money. He never stopped volunteering, every single day of his life—a true hero.

Heroes like Dr. Boccia don't get the attention they deserve. These are the community leaders who deserve awards.

He has also been recognized internationally.

As they say in Yiddish, he was a true mensch, or in Italian, he was a grande uomo.

As the Rotary motto says, "Service above self."

Rest in peace, Dr. Boccia.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments, dated November 1, 2016, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SIMPLE STOPWATCH INC. ACT, 2016

Mrs. Martins moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr50, An Act to revive Simple Stopwatch Inc.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

HINDU HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE HINDOU

Mr. Dickson moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 56, An Act to proclaim the month of November Hindu Heritage Month / Projet de loi 56, Loi proclamant le mois de novembre Mois du patrimoine hindou.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Joe Dickson: I am seeking, first of all, unanimous consent to have Bill 52 withdrawn and removed from the order paper.

The new bill proposes that by proclaiming the month of November as Hindu Heritage Month, the province of Ontario recognizes the important contributions that Hindu Canadians have made to Ontario's—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. We need to get that dealt with before we—I think if the members understand what has happened, the withdrawal is the unanimous consent that should have been called for.

Do we agree with the withdrawal? Agreed? Agreed.

The bill has been introduced, and therefore I'll turn to the member for a short statement.

1520

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you, Speaker. I'll just continue on.

Ontario recognizes the important contributions that Hindu Canadians have made to Ontario's social, religious, economic, political and cultural fabric. Hindu Heritage Month is an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations to live and play in our inclusive communities across Ontario.

Happy Diwali to everyone.

PETITIONS

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Steve Clark: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a staff report has recommended Upper Canada District School Board close numerous schools across eastern Ontario including Leeds–Grenville; and

“Whereas access to quality local education is essential for rural communities to thrive; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Education removed community impact considerations from pupil accommodation review guidelines in 2015; and

“Whereas local communities treasure their public schools and have been active participants in their continued operation, maintenance and success; and

“Whereas the Ontario government should focus on delivering quality, local education services to all communities, including rural Ontario;

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

“—to reinstate considerations of value to the local community and value to the local economy in pupil accommodation review guidelines; and

“—to work with all school boards, including Upper Canada District School Board, to modify the funding model to include appropriate funding that considers rural education opportunities, student busing times, accessible extracurricular and inter-school activities, a school's role as a community hub, and its value to the local economy.”

I'm pleased to affix my signature. I'll send it to the table with page Bianca.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are progressive, degenerative diseases of the brain that cause thinking, memory and physical functioning to become seriously impaired;

“Whereas there is no known cause or cure for this devastating illness; and

“Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias also take their toll on hundreds of thousands of families and care partners; and

“Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias affect more than 200,000 Ontarians today, with an annual total economic burden rising to \$15.7 billion by 2020; and

“Whereas the cost related to the health care system is in the billions and only going to increase, at a time when our health care system is already facing enormous financial challenges; and

“Whereas there is work under way to address the need, but no coordinated or comprehensive approach to tackling the issues; and

“Whereas there is an urgent need to plan and raise awareness and understanding about Alzheimer's disease and other dementias for the sake of improving the quality of life of the people it touches;

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

“To approve the development of a comprehensive Ontario dementia plan that would include the development of strategies in primary health care, in health promotion and prevention of illness, in community development, in building community capacity and care partner engagement, in caregiver support and investments in research.”

I fully agree. I'll sign it and give it to page Surya to bring up to the desk.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Han Dong: I have a petition regarding protecting rewards points earned by Ontario consumers.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition. I'll sign my name to it and give it to page Riya.

HYDRO RATES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I support this petition and I’ve affixed my signature to it as well.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario called “Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.” It reads:

“Whereas once you privatize hydro, there’s no return; and

“Whereas we’ll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

“Whereas we’ll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

“Whereas we’ll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what’s happened elsewhere;

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

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

I couldn’t agree more. I will affix my signature and give it to page Elisabeth.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

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

“Whereas payday loans are the most expensive source of credit in Canada and can create the risk of an additional financial burden for the 3% of Ontario households that borrow payday loans; and

“Whereas in Ontario a two-week payday loan carries an annualized interest rate of approximately 547.5%; and

“Whereas these loans are typically marketed to financially vulnerable consumers;

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

“Mandate the Ontario government incrementally reduce the cost of borrowing a payday loan, first to \$18 per \$100 advanced in 2017 and then to \$15 per \$100 advanced in 2018.”

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

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Robert Bailey: I have a petition here; I have actually a thousand of them here.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there is a growing energy affordability crisis in Ontario; and

“Whereas the government’s proposed hydro rebate is a band-aid solution that’s simply too little, too late;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the Liberal government to take immediate action to give the people of Ontario real relief from high energy bills.”

I agree with this and send these petitions down to the table with Surya.

DIABETES GLUCOSE MONITORING

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I would like to thank Cheryl Hunt from Essex for working with me on this petition, educating me and helping with its development. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government currently funds insulin pumps and supplies through the Assistive Devices Program for diabetes patients; and

“Whereas the government currently does not fund the cost of continuous glucose monitoring devices; and

“Whereas continuous glucose monitoring devices have been shown to help patients reduce need for insulin and medical interventions and therefore save our health care system money;

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

“That the government recognize the value of the continuous glucose monitoring devices in reducing episodes of high and low blood sugar in diabetes patients. Also, that the government recognize that when used in conjunction with insulin pumps, which are already funded, these devices help improve the quality of life and

the health of diabetes patients, and that the government immediately move to provide funding for continuous glucose monitoring devices for diabetes patients through the Assistive Devices Program.”

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerks’ table through page John.

1530

PROPERTY TAXATION

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

“Whereas the vacant unit rebate on property taxes is widely acknowledged as contributing to the high number of empty neighbourhood retail storefronts ...; and

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

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

“Whereas the city of Toronto, in the course of public hearings in 2015, formally requested the province of Ontario amend the vacant unit rebate provision ...; and

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

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

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

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

I certainly agree with this petition and leave it with Nicolas.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I present these 4,261 petitions to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

“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; and

“Whereas the market rate for electricity, according to IESO data, has been less than three cents per kilowatt

hour to date in 2016, 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; and

“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; and

“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; and

“Whereas the ill-conceived energy policies of this ... government that ignored the advice of independent 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 agree with this petition, sign it and hand it to page Riya.

VETERANS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Diane Savignac from my riding for signing the petition, and it reads as follows:

“Lest We Forget Our Duty to Care.

“Whereas we have a collective duty of care to all veterans for their service and sacrifice; and

“Whereas the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007 narrowly defines the term ‘veteran,’ restricting priority access to long-term-care beds to veterans who served prior to 1953; and

“Whereas the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007 omits veterans who enlisted after 1953 (modern-day veterans) from access to priority long-term-care beds; and

“Whereas the current population of modern-day veterans in Ontario is four times that of traditional veterans; and

“Whereas modern-day veterans are not eligible to apply for the existing 1,097 long-term-care beds ...; and

“Whereas only one in seven (1 in 7) veterans is eligible for priority long-term care in Ontario ...

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Long-Term Care Homes Amendment Act (Preference for Veterans), 2015 which extends priority access to long-term-care beds to modern-day veterans, including former officers and former non-commissioned members of the Canadian Forces.”

With Remembrance Day just around the corner, I fully support this petition, will affix my name and ask John to bring it to the Clerk.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms. Daiene Vernile: “Protecting Rewards Points Earned by Ontario Consumers.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

Speaker, I think this is a great idea. I’m going to put my name to it, and I shall hand it to page Nicolas.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I’m sorry to say that the time for petitions has now expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 31, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to amend certain Acts with respect to provincial elections / Projet de loi 45, Loi visant à modifier certaines lois en ce qui concerne les élections provinciales.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I’m pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 45, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act.

As you know, I’ve now served as MPP for 21 years. Before that, I served as a municipal politician for 14 years, as councillor, deputy mayor, mayor and warden. So with that, you know I’ve been through my share of elections. Each time that I’ve been elected, it has been an honour and a privilege. The people put their trust in us, and it is not something that we should ever take lightly. Nor should we take changes to the electoral system lightly. We always have to remember that democracy and the electoral system belong to the people, not us.

Some of the concerns I want to speak to today about Bill 45—one of my concerns about this bill is that it will actually reduce the advance poll locations, which limits people’s access to voting. The number of advance poll locations in a general election will be reduced to five in each riding, down from 10, and be reduced to three from six in a by-election. In some areas, that may not be an issue. In Toronto, you can reduce the number of locations and still have most people in the riding able to walk to an advance polling location. In my riding, that isn’t the case. In the last election, we had advance polls in Woodstock, Tillsonburg, Ingersoll, Norwich, Embro, Innerkip and Tavistock. Under this bill, two of those communities would no longer have them. Can the government tell me which two communities they think don’t deserve to have an advance poll anymore? Can the government tell me why they want to make it more challenging for people in two of these communities to vote?

That problem will be even more extreme in northern ridings where people have to travel long distances between communities.

A study by Joshua Dyck and James Gimpel, and another by Moshe Haspel and Gibbs Knotts in 2005 found that “distance to polling places, for example, is negatively correlated with turnout.” This is the impact of this bill: that people will have to travel further to vote, and as a result, some people will choose not to.

Why wouldn’t we leave it up to the local returning officer to determine how many locations are needed? We have a great returning officer in Oxford: Beth Martin. She’s fair, and she strives to make it as accessible as possible for people to vote. I think that should be the goal for everyone, and I don’t understand why the government wants to make changes that would make it more difficult for people to vote.

I’m also concerned that this bill will limit the time that advance polls are open to three days. I understand that there is an effort to keep everything uniform so there is less confusion, but that doesn’t reflect the reality of rural ridings. In the last election, Woodstock had advance polls on five days. It makes sense. It is the biggest community in my riding, and it is in the centre of the riding, so it can accommodate people from some of the surrounding communities. Ingersoll also had five days, and Tillsonburg had four. The changes under this bill may avoid a little confusion, but it means the people in Woodstock, Tillsonburg and Ingersoll will have less opportunity to vote in the advance polls.

1540

If we want people to vote, shouldn’t we make it as easy as possible? Shouldn’t we give them as many options as possible so if they’re away, working or just busy, they can still find a way to vote?

Over the past few years, many of the stories have been that voting in advance polls has been increasing, so why would we want to reduce the opportunity to vote? In fact, the federal Conservative government added an additional day of advance polls specifically to make it easier for people to vote. In the last municipal election, St. Catharines looked at ways to increase voter turnout, and their

solution was to add more advance polls. Ontario seems to be the only jurisdiction that is actually going in the other direction and reducing the advance polls.

Charles Prysby, a political science professor at the University of North Carolina in Greensboro, said, "The easier you make it to register and vote, the more people vote." He went on to say, "Early voting can boost overall turnout at the polls between 2% and 3%."

An American study that looked at the impact of convenience voting or ways of making voting easier, such as advance polls, found that, "In general, the research concludes that convenience voting has a small but statistically significant impact on turnout, with most estimates of the increase in the 2%–4% range."

Bill 45 also removes the ability of the returning officer to be flexible to respect the beliefs of our community. There are many people in my community who would not vote on a Sunday because of their religious beliefs. In other communities, people won't vote on a Saturday. Returning officers used to have the ability to accommodate these beliefs by choosing alternate days for the advance polls.

This bill also removes the requirement for the list of advance poll locations to be posted in print. We need to remember that there are many people in Ontario, including people in my riding, who do not have access to high-speed Internet. In some areas, we only have dial-up. There are some people who can't afford Internet access. It is one of the things that people are being forced to give up because of the cost of hydro. I agree with modernizing and allowing the Chief Electoral Officer to communicate in new ways, but why would we get rid of the old way if the people are still depending on it?

We have to remember that as we modernize the system, there will be some problems. We need to plan for that and ensure that it doesn't impact people's ability to vote. In the Whitby–Oshawa by-election, the new, modern voting system had some flaws. In some places, the voting stations had connection issues, leading to delays and problems sharing data within the polling station as they were supposed to. That was in a community with good connectivity. Imagine the challenges in implementing that same technology across Ontario in some of our remote communities. It is a huge challenge.

It will be even more of a challenge if the government fails to listen to people in different communities and continues to assume that everyone everywhere in the province is the same as in Toronto. I'm concerned that they are applying the Toronto standard to all communities and it is going to make it more difficult for people to vote.

I'm also concerned by the fact that the government is taking out the blackout period at the beginning of unscheduled elections. Some people may not understand why that blackout period exists. It was there to ensure that there was no unfair advertising advantage for the party which determined the timing of the election. For instance, if a government knew they were going to call an election tomorrow, they would call today to book all the

best advertising space, so by the time the other parties found out about the election date, it was too late to book those spots. In a minority, it would give the advantage to an opposition party who know that they are going to vote against the budget and defeat the government.

It is the question that came up in the Scarborough–Rouge River by-election when it became clear that the Liberal candidate had advance knowledge of the by-election date. It isn't about who announced the by-election; it is a question of, did the people making the decision provide that inside information to the people in their campaign in order to give their campaign an unfair advantage?

I hope that people will explain their reason for trying to remove the blackout, because I can't see any positive to removing it and making it less of a level playing field.

I hope the government will also explain their reasoning on allowing people to choose to use a last name that isn't their legal name. We have some concerns that it will lead to confusion. We have to remember that for the Whitby–Oshawa by-election, we had a candidate who legally changed his name to Above Znoneofthe. We need to be very careful if people are requesting to use names like that in an attempt to send a message, or choosing to use a last name very similar to other candidates' in an attempt to confuse the voters.

There's another area where there has been confusion. Bill 45 includes a section further expanding on the fact that candidates and volunteers have legal access to multi-residential buildings. I think it's a place where there is confusion among managers and residents.

There are a lot of people I've met in those buildings who are grateful that we took the time to visit. They had questions that I was able to answer or just wanted to talk to me. I think it is particularly important in ridings with a new candidate where people want the opportunity to meet the new candidate.

We have also run into people who didn't know that the law ensures access to these buildings for elections. Those people are understandably concerned about who is at their door. You knock, and the first question they have is, "How did you get into this building?" I don't think it should be legislated, but I would encourage managers of apartments and condo buildings to inform residents about the fact that candidates and campaign volunteers are allowed access to that residence so residents are not taken by surprise.

We also need to remember that there are a lot of buildings where the managers aren't on-site. When the candidate or volunteers arrive at the building, there is no one there to let them in. Does that mean that under Bill 45 those owners or property companies could be charged?

While we need to ensure that people have access to candidate information to make an informed decision, we also need to be sure that the rules reflect the reality of these apartment buildings. To ensure these rules are enforced in a fair and impartial way, we believe that the appeal should go to an impartial third party.

Having these complaints go to someone other than the Chief Electoral Officer also makes practical sense. The times when these appeals are filed would be during the election, when the Chief Electoral Officer is busiest. By the time the Chief Electoral Officer is able to resolve the issue, the election would likely be over, the people in the building wouldn't have received the information they needed to make an informed decision, and the candidates wouldn't have had the opportunity to introduce themselves.

As I said at the beginning of the speech, serving the people of Oxford is a privilege. We need to remember that an election does not belong to the government or to the people in this chamber. It belongs to the people of Ontario, and it is their right to decide who will represent them. We made that point when this government forced through legislation allowing municipalities to switch to ranked ballots, with absolutely no requirement to consult with the public—not even a single meeting. We've made the point when the federal government talked about changing the electoral system without consulting the people. We've also made the point when this government has shut down debate and forced through changes without listening to the members of the opposition or providing enough opportunities for public debate.

This bill is a perfect example of where we need to talk to members of the public. People from Woodstock, Tillsonburg, Ingersoll, Norwich, Embro, Innerkip and Tavistock, who are at risk of losing their advance poll locations, need the opportunity to express their concerns. The returning officers from Whitby–Oshawa and Scarborough–Rouge River should have the opportunity to speak to a committee and explain what worked and, maybe more importantly, what didn't in those by-elections so we can learn from their experience. People from the north should have a right to speak about the government's proposal to create a commission to look at new ridings and whether that commission has the right structure and the riding is in the right place. Mr. Speaker, the people of Ontario want more to say. They want this government to start listening to them.

As you know, the day that Bill 45 was introduced we had third reading vote on Bill 13, An Act in respect of the cost of electricity. Mr. Speaker, the people in my riding are angry about the cost of hydro, but before I could speak to that bill and share their stories, the government shut down the debate. They shut down second reading when only three members of our caucus had an opportunity to speak and limited the third reading debate to just 20 minutes per party.

I didn't get the opportunity to share the story of the single mother with two teenaged kids who has to choose between paying for heat and water or paying for food. I didn't get to tell the story of the woman who watched her mother work hard her whole life to save for retirement and is now watching her mother struggle to keep her house because of hydro bills.

1550

Mr. Speaker, on Bill 13 there was only one day of committee hearings—four hours—and the opportunity

for only 16 people to appear. Some of those people told tragic stories about the hardship they've gone through due to the cost of hydro. One said that she had to get support from the United Way so she wouldn't get her hydro cut off. But I want to point out that there were many, many more people who didn't get the opportunity to speak, who applied to speak to the committee only to find that those 16 spaces were already full. Sixteen spaces weren't sufficient for Bill 13, An Act in respect of the cost of electricity, and it isn't enough for Bill 45, which impacts our elections and democracy. Whenever we're making changes to the electoral system, we have a greater duty than normal to consult with the people and ensure that their democratic rights are respected.

There are some changes in this bill that I agree with. Moving the election from October to June will mean that the provincial election no longer overlaps with the municipal election, and that's a positive. Having both elections at the same time would have been confusing, and it would be frustrating for the voters. The government has been talking about moving the date for some time, so I was pleased that they have now finally announced that it will be the first Thursday in June, to allow Elections Ontario and potential candidates to plan.

I also agree with setting up a system so that young people who are going to be 18 when the election occurs can register in advance. After the tragedies that our community experienced last spring, I was holding meetings with young people in Woodstock to talk about some of the issues that are impacting them and whether the services that are supposed to be helping them are right. They're a smart, well-spoken group, and in every meeting I find that I learn a lot from them. I think that we should do everything we can to ensure that youth like that get involved in the political process and get to have their voices heard by voting.

But if we want people of all ages to get engaged and be part of the political process, we have to ensure that they know their voices matter and the government will listen to them. Right now, that isn't the case. People try and tell this government about the hardships their decisions on hydro have caused, and the Minister of Finance responds by saying that his bills are going down. Liberal staff misrepresent their bills on social media. People try to tell this government they are suffering because of long wait-lists and this government tries to blame the previous government, even though the Liberals have now been in power for 13 years. That doesn't send the message that the government is listening to or cares about the people of Ontario and what they're going through.

People complain about this government's selling access and that money is influencing government decisions, so the government is banning MPPs from attending any fundraisers, even the low-cost community events. That doesn't encourage people to get involved. Our riding association held an annual dinner that was advertised publicly and open to everyone. It wasn't a high ticket price—in fact, youth tickets last year were

only \$25—but it was a chance for people to come together for an enjoyable evening. It was an opportunity for people to talk about politics and share ideas.

Last June, our leader came to a dinner and had an opportunity to meet with many people from Oxford. People didn't have to purchase a ticket to meet with him; they could have simply attended the public event with their local chamber of commerce earlier in the day but many people chose to attend the dinner because they wanted to participate. We should be encouraging people to get involved, not trying to block it.

Democracy and elections belong to the people. We need to make it as easy as possible for them to participate, and then, when they choose a government, we need to ensure that the government lives up to their commitments and treats it as a privilege to serve the people, not a right.

Just yesterday, a veteran brought a poppy box to my office as the Legion began their annual campaign. It was a reminder of what people sacrificed for our democracy. I remember my mother talking about the joy when Canadian soldiers arrived to liberate our village in Holland. It was a moment that she never forgot. Soldiers put their lives at risk to give us our freedom and allow us to do many of the things that we take for granted, like voting.

While the changes we're talking about today aren't significant compared to their efforts and what they fought for, it is a reminder of the value of our democracy. We should honour them not just by wearing poppies every November, but by taking every step we can to protect our democracy and ensure that everyone can participate.

Thank you very much for allowing me to make this presentation this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments? The member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker, and good afternoon to you.

It's always a pleasure to follow my good friend from Oxford. I listened very intently to him. He was talking about the experiment that was done in Whitby–Oshawa using the vote tabulators. The Solicitor General the other day, when he introduced this bill, talked about the technology-enabled staffing model. I get the impression that the Wynne Liberals are jumping with glee about going to these vote-counting machines. What they're not taking into account are the hundreds, if not thousands, of people they're going to put out of work. There's not going to be as much of a need for the poll clerks and the different people who help out in elections when we go to these machines.

Having said that, I think we all agree that the worst thing about running a provincial election is having to use the voters list. I know in municipal elections these lists come out from MPAC, and they're no more than 66% accurate. The municipalities have to put out the resources running around trying to correct the voters list. In a provincial election, of course, it will be election officials trying to fix it.

If you're going to throw people out of work through the technology-enabled staffing model, and you won't

need as many people in a polling station because you're going to have machines that count ballots, then the very least the Wynne Liberals could do is hire those same people and pay them to go door to door and update the provincial voters list. I don't think anyone in this chamber is satisfied or was satisfied the last time, or the time before that, with the voters list that you're given when you start your campaign. It's so out of date. It's never been updated. They can't come up with a way to do it. We need to put the resources into coming up with an acceptable voters list, and this is one way to do it.

I thank you for your time this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'm pleased to rise to speak to some of the points that were raised by the MPP from Haldimand–Norfolk, as well as Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: He's from Oxford.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: No, I'm talking about the MPP. He's not the Speaker; well, the Speaker's an MPP too.

Anyway, speaking to the Speaker, I just wanted to say that I have to begin by agreeing with the member from Haldimand–Norfolk that it is indeed a privilege to serve in any democracy—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: He's from Oxford.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Oh, sorry. My apologies; it's Oxford.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Beautiful country.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Yes.

Interjection.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I agree with the member from Oxford on that.

I did want to say on the issue around electronic voting, I think you raised the point that we're treating all communities like Toronto, which might have extensive bandwidth. I wanted to say that paper voting will still be allowed, so if electronic voting is not possible in certain places for whatever reason, either because the Internet capacity isn't there or there are some issues with the technology, you'll still be able to vote on paper.

What's really interesting is that I was just doing some research and I discovered that the country of my birth, India, which is not a First World country yet, went to electronic voting in 2004. We know the levels of illiteracy and the levels of bandwidth are not the same as Ontario's. It's just to say that if India can make it work, I'm sure that here in Ontario we can make it work and modernize as well, keeping in mind that where there isn't the ability to do electronic voting, we do have a backup plan.

The other issue that I wanted to very quickly talk to is around access to buildings. I hear the point that the member from Oxford made around the privacy that residents need, but the flip side is that sometimes it's the property manager who is making that decision on behalf of residents and denying them access to the candidates. This legislation takes a look at balancing that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's a pleasure to join the debate this afternoon. I sincerely compliment the member from Oxford because while he cites that it's a privilege to serve Oxford, I can honestly tell you the people of Oxford county and his riding absolutely adore the work that he does on their behalf. A perfect example of that is his great work, on behalf of some amazing families, that resulted in Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week. They're still championing that. We tip our hats to you.

1600

He is so experienced and eloquent in sharing why this particular bill, Bill 45, is important. He raised a really good point that I want to focus on. The act is specifically called An Act to amend certain Acts with respect to provincial elections. With that, one of the—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It just rolls off your tongue.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Yes, it just rolls off your tongue; that's right.

With that, I want to share that, while we're looking to amend, we don't want to amend democratic rights. He raised in this House the fact that for Bill 13 deputations were limited to only 16 spots. I really admire the fact that when we promoted it in my riding, two people actually got in to share their concerns about Bill 13: Norma Schmidt from the Kincardine area and Marguerite Thomas from Brussels. I thank them for taking the time to prepare and come to Toronto or call in to share their concerns.

Again, we're talking about some significant amendments. Sixteen spaces for people from across Ontario to come together and depute and share their thoughts on significant changes to Bill 45 is not enough. We are jeopardizing our democracy by limiting it to 16 spaces.

To the member from Oxford, I say that I totally agree with you, and our caucus stands behind you in saying that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to respond to the comments from the member for Oxford, my colleague in southwestern Ontario, with regard to Bill 45, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act. The member raised some good points.

The provisions of the bill that I wanted to focus on in my brief time this afternoon are around voluntary registration of 16- and 17-year-old future voters. I had the opportunity recently to visit a grade 5 class in my riding, in Notre Dame Catholic School. Of course, the grade 5 students have their civics unit. The question that the students put to me was, why can't they vote? They were very interested in exercising their democratic rights to participate in an election.

So I welcome actions like this that hopefully will engage youth earlier and make it more likely that they will actually go to the polling station and vote when they turn 18. We know the success of initiatives like campus polling stations to make it easier for people to vote. We saw the increase in voter turnout in the last federal election. These kinds of changes are very important to engage young people and get them voting.

At the same time, we all, through our collective caucuses, have an obligation to ensure that the issues that we are bringing to the electors during an election campaign speak to young people. We need to talk about things like precarious work. We need to talk about the huge levels of student debt that are crippling young people and making it much more difficult for them to get into the workforce.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Oxford for final comments.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, the minister responsible for seniors, the member from Huron–Bruce and the member from London West for their kind comments.

I want to make a couple of quick replies to the minister responsible for seniors. I want to assure the minister that I'm not opposed to electronic voting or to the modernization of our voting system. My concern is that when we implement that, we do it properly. We've had a number of examples where governments put a program in place and then find it all falls apart as we're implementing it. I want to make sure that we don't have to have a second election because we decided to go the electronic way and that, in fact, it all fell apart.

The other issue I just wanted to talk about was access to buildings. I agree with her that sometimes it's the landlord that's keeping us out and that we can clear that up. Just the other day, I was in one of those buildings, and I was let in by one of the tenants. I was about halfway through the development. A gentleman, when I told him who I was, said, "Come with me. I've got to show you something," and he marched me right back out to the front door and said, "Because you have no business here." I said, "Well, sir, I'm not here to anger you, but there are a lot of people in this building who want the politicians to come and bring a message of what they stand for to help them make a decision." He said, "Well, if it's the law, I guess that you can be here. But I'll have to check the law."

All I'm saying in my remarks is that we need to do a better job of communicating so people understand the politicians can't go there and make friends by—or them assuming that you broke into the building to talk to them. I think we need to do a better job of communicating that these are the rules and that everyone has a right to have people come to their door and explain what it is the election is about and hopefully encourage them to put their X in the right place.

Thank you very much for your comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'm pleased to join in the debate.

Bill 45 has a number of proposed objectives, and I think those objectives are very supportable. The two general objectives of the bill—one is to encourage increased voter turnout. I'll focus on this as a part of my debate today: the strategies for increasing voter engagement, making it easier to vote. The second proposed objective of this legislation is to increase the representation

of First Nations. I think both of these goals are very laudable, very important goals. I'll highlight how some of the components of this bill will actually benefit these two objectives in some way. I'll also talk about how we need to do far more to really achieve these two goals, or to propose something that will meaningfully increase these two stated objectives.

Let's go over some of the key components that actually will work, in some ways that will benefit.

In general, as a principle, we need to make sure that we have a system where it is as easy as possible to vote. There should be no barriers to voting. It should be something that is encouraged from the beginning, in terms of the ability to announce when it's going to happen. And the actual process itself has to be as streamlined as possible. We don't want any barriers at all when it comes to voting. If we hold to the principle that, as elected members of this assembly, we are caretakers of democracy and we are supporting the democratic institution of this province, then it's very incumbent upon us to ensure that it is something that we actually support—we make it easier; we support it; we facilitate it. I support that notion.

Some of the ideas that are contained here that I think are positive ideas—looking at giving the CEO, the Chief Electoral Officer, the tools to be able to engage with the populace in a modern way. Allowing the CEO to use social media, to use electronic means of communication seems to be just a basic step forward, and so those amendments and those changes are of course supportable and are positive.

Looking at access issues: I'm sure all of us can share stories about how difficult it is sometimes to access a building. If you have large, residential buildings in your riding—apartment buildings, condominium buildings—they can be very difficult to access. Sometimes you meet a condo manager or an apartment manager who is very, very supportive, who understands how important it is for you to be able to get into the building to speak with voters, to speak with the residents, and it's a good experience. But then many times it's the exact opposite: It is so hard to get in. It's like getting into Fort Knox. You have to explain, "Listen, I'm here to let people know." "No. No one is allowed in. You're not a resident." "I know I'm not a resident, but I want to let people know about what's going on in the election. I am the candidate, and I want to communicate with them." You hear all sorts of obstacles to getting in—and that's for the candidate. Imagine volunteers who try to get in. They're often coming back with stories about how difficult it is to get into a building.

So ensuring that there are very strong rights of access—but then also including a form of encouragement by way of a punishment, by ensuring that there is a remedy. If you have a right of access but there's no remedy, then often we see that these types of legislation or these types of rights don't actually result in any increased access. But if you have a right that's backed up with a remedy—in this case, some sort of sanction—then

you're more likely to see compliance. In this case, if there's an apartment building where you can't get access, there is a remedy that would result in a sanction. I think that might help.

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More important than a sanction of this nature, which might work, I think it's important to make sure that there's some strong education around ensuring that all apartment buildings and condominiums and other sorts of residential places of this nature have some clear education with respect to the rights of volunteers during a campaign to access the building to provide information. I think that's very important.

There is a component of this bill that looks towards encouraging young people to get engaged more. I was just looking at some of the stats around that. Engagement in general is pretty terrible in our province, and in fact in the country. We hover around the 50% mark, and for some time period we fell below 50% of eligible voters voting. Below 50% of the population actually engaging in that democratic right to vote is very troubling. I'll get into some details on how we can really meaningfully increase that engagement, but the evidence suggests that there are some serious problems.

In particular, when we look at young people, in 2011—with respect to the federal data—39% of young people who were eligible to vote voted. That is abysmally low. We've seen a big uptake in 2015, at 57%, but still we're hovering around half of the people who can vote are voting, and sometimes less than half the people. That's troubling, Mr. Speaker. That doesn't make sense. We need to have more people engaged.

The idea of a voluntary registry for 16-year-olds and 17-year-olds is something that was recommended by the Chief Electoral Officer. The recommendation was that it would start getting young people thinking about the fact that they will become voters in a couple of years. It will get them registered so that in the future, when they turn 18, it's easier to send them a correspondence. If they're already registered and they're going off to university, it might be easier to maintain contact.

What's so important to note is that this is a voluntary process and it won't actually—

Interruption.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: That may or may not have been my phone.

What's more important, though, than just this voluntary registry is really looking at having, at the age of 16 and 17, a very clear and strong curriculum around this, strong school education around this. We have people who are in school when they're 16 and 17. If there was a strong, school-based program to transition those students into eligible voters and encourage them with respect to how they can vote, and how important it is to vote, I think that's even more important. That's something I would like to see.

We have civics, but often the civics courses are earlier—they're grade 9 or grade 10—and later on people forget what civics is all about. But having some sort of

school-based program in the later years of high school, when these young people are going to become eligible voters very soon, would be a better strategy, and I think that's something we should consider, Mr. Speaker.

My colleague the member from London West touched on something that I think is crucial, and I spoke to someone else who also raised this issue: If you really want to engage young people, or if you want to engage people in general, it's the issues that engage people. If we want to increase voter turnout for young people, we need to propose solutions to the problems that young people are facing.

The member alluded to a number of issues and I want to just touch on those. I think it's so important. If the goal of this legislation is to increase youth turnout—and one of the proposed objectives is in terms of engaging the electorate more to encourage participation—if we want to do that with respect to young people, we need to then talk about the issues that impact young people. For students who are transitioning to that age when they're able to vote—age 18—one of the major issues that is affecting young people in our current climate is youth unemployment. It's massive; it's the highest it's ever been. We've had record levels of unemployment for young people, particularly. We need to address that.

In addition, students who graduate have crushing debt, and we need to look to how we can address that issue. One initiative that we propose is waiving the provincial portion of the interest on that debt. Because it's one thing to have debt that you know you need to pay off, but there's another crushing element of seeing that debt increase year after year because of interest. That can completely eradicate your hope and really take a toll on your spirit. That would be a powerful way to get young people engaged: by saying that we're speaking to their issues, we're championing their issues.

In addition, we have some of the highest tuition fees in all of Canada. That tuition fee being so high is not a coincidence, it's not a mistake, it's not by accident. It's because this government has some of the lowest funding per capita for post-secondary education. So it comes as no surprise that our tuition fees are so high. If we really want to engage young people, we need to address their concerns—high tuition fees—by increasing the funding to post-secondary education, freezing tuition fees and reducing tuition fees in a meaningful way. That's how we can engage young people.

In general, one constant theme that we see with respect to low voter turnout: People are cynical about politics. Why they're cynical: They see politicians make flashy announcements on the eve of an election, and turn around and break those promises. It's happened countless times in countless ridings. I can speak to specific promises broken time and time again in my riding, where right at the eve of the election, people are concerned about the hospital and the promise out of the mouth of the candidate is "We will not shut down this hospital." After election day, the hospital is shut down. Then the promise is "Okay, we've shut it down, but we will just renovate it.

We won't demolish it." What happens, Mr. Speaker? They don't renovate it; they demolish it.

All of these promises happen strategically right before an election, and then they're broken right afterwards. What that does is it makes people say "There's no point in voting. If we vote, nothing is going to happen." What happens is by being cynical because of these very cynical politics, people don't vote. Then the same people that are the cause of this cynicism are re-elected. It's a self-perpetuating system. It benefits the status quo. It benefits keeping certain parties and certain members in power that don't actually address the problem, that don't raise the concerns of their constituents. It engages fewer and fewer people, making it easier for the same people to stay elected. It's this kind of self-fulfilling prophecy.

These are some of the issues we need to really tackle if we want to engage the populace. We need to be more accountable with respect to promises made, we need to be more engaged with what the concerns of the constituents are and speak to the issues that actually connect to the people of the province, then we'll see an increase in voting.

Let's go on to talk about one of the other key proposals of this bill, which is to increase the representation of First Nations. In particular, this bill aims to address that in the northern communities. We need to do some very strong consultation to ensure that the bill actually achieves that with some of the new proposed boundaries, and see if it's effectively really increasing that representation. But if this is a proposed goal, we need to look at some of the actual issues impacting First Nations and indigenous people.

One of the first things we need to do is—our relationship with respect to the indigenous people of this land needs to be based on a platform of reconciliation, of acknowledging the harm done, the terrible harm done historically by Canada, acknowledging that in all our interactions and our dealings, and base it on a healing and reconciliation platform and lens. We need to go as far as looking at—and the minister has spoken about this—having a robust curriculum that talks about some of the heinous crimes committed against indigenous people, like residential schools.

I also strongly believe that if you want justice, you need to name the injustice. So to name the injustice—the provincial government and the federal government have engaged in policies that amount to cultural genocide, and in fact, they can go further and say they amount to direct genocide. If you look at the systemic policies enacted by the government, both provincial and federal, that is the reality, and we need to name that. We have to name what it is so that we can address it in a meaningful way. When we do that, then we actually step forward on a path towards really engaging First Nations people.

The other promising sign was the Métis legislation that we brought forward in the past couple of years. The Métis legislation, which acknowledges the Métis people as a nation within a nation, I think is the right sort of discourse around how we should communicate, from

government and nation, with the First Nations people. That sort of dichotomy, or that sort of framework, is a respectful framework, recognizing the First Nations people as a nation. I think that's important. I think the Métis legislation was certainly a step forward in that regard, a positive step. It actually showed a commitment towards recognizing that new framework.

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So, again, if we want to meaningfully engage with First Nations people, absolutely we need to look at functional, administrative things like boundaries and engaging certain communities based on geography. We also need to engage communities based on issues. There are two major issues that are going on right now that this province has the ability to address, and they're not doing so. It's cleaning the waters of two communities: Gogama, as well as the Grassy—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Grassy Narrows.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The Grassy Narrows community; thank you very much to the member from Essex for reminding me.

The Grassy Narrows tragedy, the fact that the community's water is so horribly polluted, is directly something the government should take responsibility for and should immediately clean up. That they have not been doing so is offensive; it's appalling; it's disrespectful. There can be no meaningful engagement with First Nations people if this government continues down a path of avoiding the problem, passing on responsibility and not actually taking action. We know there is mercury poisoning in the water. We know that there can be steps taken to address it. This government is simply not doing it.

With respect to the Gogama spill, we know that CN can be ordered by this government to clean up the water. The government can do that. The government can make that order, but they haven't done it; they haven't taken that step.

How can we stand in this assembly and say that we're interested in engaging First Nations communities, we want to see the representation increase, if we're not going to address basic, fundamental rights like access to clean water, when the government is not taking the steps to order another party to clean up water that's been polluted by that party? It's not like it's a question; it's not like there's a controversy here. It's very clear that CN is responsible. They need to take the steps to clean up the water. This government can order that to happen. They're not doing it.

With Grassy Narrows, the community has cried out. They've done protests here. They have come to Queen's Park, made that trek from so far, to request that this water be cleaned up. But the government has not done it.

Again, it's one thing to say, "Okay, we're going to do some administrative changes. We're going to look at some legislative changes towards increasing representation," but it's another thing to actually speak about the issues, to actually address the concerns of the people. I think that's the more meaningful way of engaging the

community and increasing that representation, so I respectfully request that the government look into that.

Some of the changes with respect to the actual procedure and the process in the polling stations, looking at the use of more electronic counting measures, looking at the use of strike-off data—those are steps that will streamline the process. But, as the member from Windsor–Tecumseh pointed out, if there's a cost savings, we need to look at how we can bring that cost savings into hiring more people to be engaged in the electoral process. There are certain jobs that will no longer be necessary because of the actual counting process, but there are certainly ways that we can engage the community in a meaningful way through employment opportunities that actually will help increase voter turnout. There might be some other strategies we need to look at, but I think that's an important point that was brought up by the member.

In general, on the notion of moving towards digital balloting, electronic balloting, online balloting, there are a lot of questions around this in terms of security in our current climate. I know that there have been serious concerns just south of the border with respect to data and privacy and security with respect to hacking and potential breaches of security. I think that's even more important when we look at how special a privilege this is or how special a right this is for us to be able to vote and how important we hold democracy to be.

We can address these issues and concerns, but I think we need to be very sensitive to that reality. I think the future is going to be in some form of electronic balloting; online voting is the future. There needs to be a way for us to do that in a way that's accessible. I think it's the most accessible way for us to vote, but we need to make sure it's done in a way that respects the realities of security and privacy. I'm certain we can come up with those solutions.

With the examples we've seen of this government, though, with respect to implementing electronic testing, for example, with EQAOs, we've seen a gross failure for this government of doing that in a way that was secure and efficient, as many of those tests were lost completely.

The government doesn't have the best track record with implementation with respect to anything electronic. We can look at eHealth and we can look at a host of other electrical systems like SAMS, and this government doesn't have the best track record, but it is the future so we need to make sure that there's some seriousness, there's a firmness and hopefully not the same track record this government has shown. That's certainly something we need to look at in the future.

All told, this bill has a number of positive things and it's something that we're prepared to support. We look forward to hearing more debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It's a pleasure to have an opportunity to stand for a couple of minutes this afternoon and lend my voice in some comments—

Interjection.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: —with respect to Bill 45. I always appreciate hearing a supportive chorus of shout-outs from the member from Nepean–Carleton here in the House, of course.

We just heard the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton speak to some of the concerns that he has in the bill, but, broadly speaking, the fact that he and, if I understood him correctly, members of the NDP caucus will be supporting Bill 45 is encouraging to hear. There obviously are a number of elements contained within this legislation that will both in the short term directly impact how we go about managing and administering our elections in the province, and also some stuff in the bill that will deal with some of the longer-term potential positive side effects, I'll call them, Speaker.

Some in this House will know that I'm very proud to be the father of two young children, a nine-year old—actually, my older daughter turns nine today; she's nine years old as of today—and a five-year-old—

Mr. Steve Clark: Same as Tim Hudak.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Exactly. Exactly the same, as the member from Leeds–Grenville just mentioned: the same as Tim Hudak's birthday.

I will say that I am particularly pleased to see the pre-voter registration for 16- and 17-year-olds. A number of years ago, long before I was elected to serve in this Legislature, back in 2005-06, I was delighted to serve as a co-chair to the city of Vaughan's Task Force on Democratic Participation and Renewal. There were a number of recommendations that flowed from that municipal task force that in many respects are somewhat in alignment with elements that are contained in this legislation.

The notion that we can somehow broaden the opportunity for more younger people—as I look at the young women and men who are sitting here in front of you today, Speaker—so that they can have a better understanding of the implications of casting their vote, I think is something that every member on all sides of this House can certainly support. Again I say, as the father of two young children, I am excited to see that we are moving in that direction, and I hope that all members in this House will support Bill 45.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to rise and provide a few minutes of comment. It was a great speech by the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton. I appreciate his comments. I also appreciate the Minister of Transportation and some of his comments, especially about young voters, and—

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: What did he say?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Same hairstyle.

Mr. Steve Clark: Yes, we go to the same barber. Yes, Speaker—my evil twin over there.

I want to again talk about engaging young people because, over the last two years, I have had—and I know it's a little off-topic for the bill, but these young women are very engaged in politics. Over the last two years, I've

had Girls Government, and I've worked with Equal Voice and also with Girls Inc. of Upper Canada in my riding of Leeds–Grenville. I have to tell you, it's a very invigorating experience to sit with young people and talk about their views on politics—and not just provincial politics but federal politics and municipal politics. It's great when you spend the time with them and get them engaged. I brought a group of young grade 10 and grade 11 girls here to Queen's Park for the last two years. They've really enjoyed it. They've also had the opportunity, with my federal colleague the MP for Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Gord Brown, to see the House of Commons.

Despite what's in this bill—and we're going to be supporting the bill—I challenge all members to get young people involved in our process, to introduce them to local mayors and local councillors. I had a great opportunity, Speaker, when I was very young, to get involved in municipal government, and it was very satisfying to me to get to meet people and work with people that I would never have the opportunity to. Spend some time in some schools; spend some time educating people. I think it's a great opportunity.

I'm proud that our critic has indicated that we will be supporting this bill, and I look forward to a broader discussion. Please, let's get this bill moving.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to add to the debate and to congratulate my friend, our colleague the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, who did a pretty good job—a really good job, an excellent job, a great job—at highlighting some of the concerns that we have on this side of the House, definitely around the provisions around new electronic voting mechanisms.

We have seen so many incidents around the world, whether it be in the financial industry or in national governments and some of their agencies being attacked. This is something that I don't think has been solved. If you look at the financial industry, these are the people that have some of the highest knowledge around cyber security, and they're still vulnerable to attacks. It's something that we would have to really put a significant amount of resources into, to ensure the confidence that we would have in the current system. You can always go back and check that vote, check that ballot, that it was cast. Where are the assurances that that would be the same case?

But I don't want to get into that, Speaker. By and large, the bill is a step forward in reforming some of our electoral mechanisms. I like the provision around incentivizing, enticing and involving young people to be a part of the process. The voluntary registration to vote I think gets people engaged. It's something that we can do, as members, as we go out into our communities. I know I love going into the grade 5 and grade 10 civics classes in and around my community. That might be a role to play there: to get them engaged and let them know that they

can be an active part of the process before they are eligible to vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? I saw the member from Barrie first. It's actually now the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

It's all yours; take it away.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise in response to the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton and add another voice of the follicly challenged to this afternoon's debate. I'm very happy to hear that the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton will be supporting this bill, as I believe I heard from the official opposition benches as well.

It is an important step forward. Certainly, one of the pieces that I'm most enthusiastic about is the pre-registration of young people. That is such an incredibly powerful tool, because we can actually go into the high schools, talk to 16- and 17-year-olds, explain the electoral process, explain their rights and, I would indeed say, their obligation to participate in that. By doing that at an earlier age, I do believe that we will have a significant impact on engaging young people in the process.

The electronic voting I think is also a very important step forward. I come from a jurisdiction, the city of Toronto, where electronic machines to tabulate the results of paper ballots have been used for several decades now, and they work very well. There are very, very few instances of any problems. When there is a problem, the paper ballots still exist. They can be recounted manually, so there is that provision.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I think the fixed election date in early June is very important, to ensure that in Ontario we would avoid having municipal and provincial elections at the same time in the future. I think that's an incredibly positive step forward in terms of making sure the voters are well informed and clear on the choices that are before them.

I'm also very happy about the changes we're making in the north to make sure northerners have better representation in the electoral process as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton for final comments.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you to all the members for joining in the debate. I want to just highlight two points. One of the points I didn't get to touch on in my speech, actually, and I thank the member for raising it.

The changing of the date from October to June: I think this might turn out to be a positive change, and I want to just weigh in on that. First, I think the fact that it avoids the overlap that could happen given a snap election or a minority government—if we had overlapping provincial and federal and particularly municipal in the same month of October, which I think creates confusion—I think that's a good idea. I'm also hoping that the June date would encourage some students who are often away from school—university students—to vote as well.

I think that what we need to do is back up any of these assumptions with data. I think it's important for us to

track to see if these changes have increased, have encouraged, have supported young voters or other voters to be engaged. I hope that there is some mechanism to then track some of these changes or to obtain some feedback from the populace, from the people, to make sure that there is some connection.

With respect to the younger voter registration, the 16- and 17-year-olds, I want to highlight again how just registering younger people alone won't be a tool to engage them unless there is some additional training, education and meaningful engagement. Simply signing up on a sheet and saying that they're going to be registered to vote down the road is not enough in and of itself. It could be a starting point for the conversation, but then there needs to be an actual conversation about what that means, what that looks like, what are your rights, what are your obligations. I agree with the idea of: "What are your responsibilities with respect to voting?" But I think that needs to be fleshed out. It needs to be very clear in terms of what that is going to look like. What is that awareness going to look like so that we can really meaningfully engage young people?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'll be sharing my time with the minister responsible for women's issues and accessibility and the member for Beaches–East York, please.

I think it is very appropriate that we're debating this bill, Bill 45, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act, at this time of the year. At this time of the year, we are all focused on what veterans have done for us, and the rights and privileges that they have made sure that we in Canada are so lucky to have.

Your vote matters. When you vote, you're helping to shape the future of our province. I do agree with the former speaker who said that it should be an obligation. It's not just a right; it's also an obligation. You have to decide things like where new schools and hospitals are built and how our governments should grow the economy and create jobs.

In Ontario, we're facing very real challenges when it comes to voter turnout. In the 2014 election, less than 52% of the people who were qualified to vote did vote. When it comes to young people, the number is even lower. In the last election, only 34% of the youth cast a ballot. We need to address this challenge and encourage more people to participate in their democracy. That's why we've introduced a bill that would, if passed, modernize the voting process, better engage young people and make it easier for them to vote. Everyone knows that young people are attached to their devices—their computers, their iPhones. I think this alone will be an encouragement for them.

I spoke last Friday to Mr. Jamie Babcock's grade 12 class at Innisdale high school in Barrie, and I'll tell you, they were so intensely interested and asked such wonderful questions. I know that they are going to be ready to vote—not necessarily always for me, but I believe that they are ready and willing and wanting to vote. I think that's important.

We've introduced this bill that, if passed, will, as I said, modernize the voting process, better engage people and make it easier for them to vote. Specifically, this bill would engage young people in the political process earlier by introducing pre-voter registration for 16- and 17-year-olds and moving the scheduled election date from fall to spring. I think that's important because at that time of the year, we will have more volunteers and more people out to become involved, whether it's post-secondary students, secondary students or other adult volunteers.

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It would also make it easier to find advance polls by standardizing locations and hours.

Getting election results faster by counting the votes electronically instead of by hand is a bonus for everyone. I know a lot of us had late nights on election night. It was a great result, but it's nice for people to know the results before they head off to bed for a workday the next day.

Establishing a Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission to improve representation of people living in Ontario's northernmost communities, including indigenous people: I think this is also very important. We need to get indigenous people—make it easier for them to take part in the electoral process.

Most of these proposals were based on recommendations from Ontario's Chief Electoral Officer, and I think they are good recommendations. I would suggest that everyone should pay close attention to this bill and support it when it's time to vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm happy to take this opportunity to rise second in line here to have a conversation about Bill 45, as the member from Barrie has finished her remarks. I appreciate very much her summary of some of the issues involved with this bill.

What's important is we've already heard many members talk about the importance of increasing voter turnout. So much of this bill is going to address some key aspects of that, and I'm delighted that we're bringing it forward. I'm hearing that there will be unanimous support in the House for it.

Particularly with the experience I had in Beaches–East York when I ran, we actually had very good turnout. Our turnout went from about 48% in the previous election to almost 58% in this election.

Interjection.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Exactly. We had opportunities to engage people in a very positive way.

In the course of the debate during that election, both the previous member who sat on the other side of the House and me, we ran a very upbeat campaign. It wasn't full of negativity. We weren't attacking each other. We weren't going after personal—because I like the guy. I think we had a history. I think he liked me. He was a little surprised that I was running, but we had a very positive engagement.

I think the energy we brought to the campaign helped contribute to the turnout. Things like very good weather

that day didn't hurt, the fact that the party's positions and our Premier were running very, very high in popularity—which was a fantastic inducement for people to come out and support her. So this was an important component of why we had a good turnout in Beaches–East York.

If we really want to go down that route, I think we have to be sending a much more positive message in this House to the people of Ontario. What they are seeing in this House, these sanctimonious, continual attacks, the character assassinations that we see coming out of the—

Hon. Michael Coteau: Shameful.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It is shameful. To listen to the rhetoric from the other side as they come out with grotesque exaggerations of positions, grotesque exaggerations of where our government is going, and to level those and attack the personal integrity of a Premier who is without a doubt the most ethical, publicly minded, focused person I've ever met—and it's interesting to compare. While she may be riding low in the polls now and is riding lower than where the fortunes of our party are, the policies she has brought forward are scoring very well with the population.

The reason she has this lower public perception is because of the continual personal attacks, what we're hearing. It's hard when you are always focusing—it sends a message to the public. I'm telling you, it brings all of us down; it does. When you're in the House and you have your school kids up here who are here to watch debate, I have to tell them, "Ignore what you're seeing. It's just about a bunch of circus clowns acting for the cameras. It isn't real debate. It is just about a circus"—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'm enjoying the debate. I'm not enjoying the dialogue that's going back and forth. I would ask that parties on all sides refrain from some of the comments that I'm hearing, especially some of the negative character assassinations that I'm hearing.

I would also remind the speaker, as well—you started off on a positive note, and I would encourage you to continue with that and to not go down that slippery slope. I would ask you to continue.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Point of order, the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I believe the member from Beaches–East York deserves to withdraw his remark and apologize to the House for calling his colleagues "circus clowns." I find that to be very unparliamentary language.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I did hear that comment. I allowed it. However, on a point of order, if the member from Beaches–East York would like to withdraw that comment, I will give him that option.

Further debate? Continue, please.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Speaker, I withdraw. That was said in the heat of the moment. I do withdraw. It was the acting aspect that I was trying to get to because what the youth in Ontario are seeing and what the people of Ontario are seeing is "a pox on all of our houses." So let's get back to the more positive things.

Youth engagement is extraordinarily important. My own daughters—I used to bring them into the voting booth with me when I was out to vote. From the time they were three or four or five years of age, they would come into the voting booth with me, and they learned about the process. That was very, very important engagement.

In my own life, my father ran in 1963 and 1967. I was engaged in campaigning when I was a young lad. I was the president of the youth wing of a riding association, Rosedale, when I was 15 years old. So I got engaged.

When I look at the issues in this bill which talk about youth engagement—the pre-registration: That’s actually an extraordinarily important thing because, when they actually do turn 18, that information will be on the website. Elections Ontario will be able to send them a note about their entitlement to vote and where they’ll vote, and they’ll get that information. I’m extremely proud that we’re going in that direction.

In my own riding of Beaches–East York, we have developed a very active youth wing, arising from me going to speak in local high schools. I’ll be speaking next week at Malvern Collegiate Institute, which is just down the street from my new house, to talk to the grade 10 civics class. I’m delighted that I can bring this part of the bill up with them so they can enjoy it.

Just last night it was Halloween. How proud was I when our riding association’s youth wing showed up at my door all dressed in costumes? They’re grade 11s and grade 12s, 16- and 17-year-olds, pulling wagons and hamper bags looking for non-perishable donations. How amazing was it to get my riding association youth engaged in raising donations for the food bank in our community? I was delighted to see that.

We’ve also heard some discussion about voters lists. I know that the member for Windsor–Tecumseh was waving his hand and saying, “It’s not even in the bill. Why are you even talking about voters list improvements?” Let’s be very clear: We know that the Chief Electoral Officer will be following this debate, and he needs to hear the message that the lists are a mess. They need to get a handle on how we improve these lists. I know that he has structures in place, and they’re going to find ways.

I just bought my house in Beaches–East York last year. I got my MPAC notice. While my wife and I are both—well, not technically my wife yet; I’m working on it. While we’re both now on the voters list from MPAC, and that information goes forward, the fact is that the previous tenants are also still on my bill. How crazy is that? They know a sale has taken place. All they need to do is check—

Interjection.

Mr. Arthur Potts: No, those people don’t live here anymore. They would never have lived through the construction we went through. They should have come off the list, and they didn’t. That’s a really tragic thing. So between MPAC getting its act together, between—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me.

Occasionally, in this Legislature, there are sidebars going on. For the most part, it’s okay, until it gets to the point where I cannot hear the speakers clearly. What I really find a little annoying is when three sidebars right in front of me are being conducted. I would ask that, if you want to engage, you do it much quieter.

I will allow the member to continue.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate it, because I hope I’m saying important things that all members want to understand and hear.

We know the Chief Electoral Officer’s work—between MPAC getting its act together and between our tax returns, where you can sign off, this should be happening far more seamlessly than it is by just putting these lists together. So I hope we’ll get that right for 2018.

1650

Finally, I’ll just say a few quick things on electronic voting, if you don’t mind. This is very important. From my own personal experience, I was the last member called on election night. It was 1:15 in the morning. Twice my father ran, in 1963 and 1967, as I mentioned, and both times he lost as a Liberal in St. David’s riding by the smallest number of votes in the province. There my mother and I were at 11:30 at night. She’s sitting watching me—I’m up 10 and down 20. She’s saying, “Oh, my God, I hope this isn’t happening again.” But we had to wait till 11:30 when the penultimate poll, the second-last poll came in—it was an advance poll—500 people voted and I won it handily. But it was late. If we’d had electronic ballots, electronic tabulation, we would have known a lot earlier that I had squeaked by by 431 votes.

So, Speaker, on that, I’ll turn it over to the minister for her comment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the minister responsible for women’s issues as well as responsible for accessibility.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I’m enjoying listening to this debate and the comments from the members from Barrie and Beaches–East York.

To the member for Beaches–East York: When you said that your youth riding association was out trick-or-treating last night, I was waiting with anticipation to hear what costumes they were wearing—if they were perhaps going out as politicians. I say congratulations to them for being out with other young people and supporting a local food drive, I think you said it was. That’s fantastic.

In the few minutes I have, Speaker, I too want to talk about what Bill 45 means to young people. We know that, in the 2014 election, for example, less than 52% of people voted. That number was far, far lower when it came to eligible youth who cast their ballots last time. That’s why modernizing the legislation and the voting process is very important.

The provision that is before us to register young people earlier by introducing the pre-voter register for 16- and 17-year-olds is a very good thing to do. It en-

courages greater youth participation. We know that Elections Ontario already does some outreach to get youth interested in the electoral process. It's this provisional registration that is going to provide even more opportunities for young people to get involved.

As we know, many riding associations have youth riding associations or councils. I believe that young people can register with a riding association as of the age of 14. So they can get involved politically that way. There are also a number of fantastic youth councils in Ontario. There's a great one in Durham region, where I live. It's a non-partisan organization. It's a group made up of young people, supported by the municipality and the city of Pickering, in the case of the one I'm thinking of. Those young people are very engaged in what's going on in their community and politically.

We know that it's important that we move on this because other countries are already leading the way, engaging young people to participate. Some states, as well as Australia, are ahead of us. Even here in Canada, both Quebec and Nova Scotia currently have advance registration for 16- and 17-year-olds. We've already seen that, in other jurisdictions, it makes sense to create a provisional register to help youth be engaged. Our message is that we want young people to know that voting matters, that voting affects their daily lives. Whether it's education, health care, transportation, getting your driver's licence, social services, going on to college or university, what happens here provincially and, for that matter, federally and municipally affects young people. Having a say by voting or even being a provisional voter is a very important step.

I've spoken about my young people at home. I have two 18-year-old twins. Well, they're not home; they're off at college and university. Even when mom is a politician, sometimes they aren't maybe as engaged as we might think they are. You think, "Well, mom's an MPP. Mom's a cabinet minister. They must be really involved." They're not as involved as people might think, and then their friends perhaps less so, certainly when it comes time for a campaign and you're canvassing and all that kind of stuff.

My kids get involved; my daughter even scrutineered in the last general election. She wasn't keen on getting too involved but I think, as she got older, she decided she wanted to support her mom and she went out scrutineering at night when the votes were being counted. She actually went out and pulled the vote in the afternoon. I was very proud of her for doing that because I try very hard not to put a lot of pressure on my kids to do a lot of what I do. I don't drag them out to a lot of events. It's very important that they develop their own journey and path in life, whether that involves politics, public administration or something else. But I thought it was great that they got out and helped.

I think this bill that's before us provides broader mechanisms for young people to be engaged. It builds on the work that youth councils already do in our province. It builds on the work of young Liberal, Conservative and

NDP riding associations, where they can register as early as age 14. The important message is that young people can make a difference. Sometimes the current feeling is, "My one voice isn't going to make a difference." I think the measures before us say the opposite, that your opinion matters. The youth of today are leaders tomorrow.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to be joining the debate today on Bill 45. I'll have an opportunity to speak for a full 20 minutes just moments from now, but I wanted to add my voice to this bill.

Look, when we talk about electronic voting, it's about time that we've had this conversation in this assembly. Years ago, when the city of Ottawa was amalgamated from 11 municipalities into one, one of the first things that was undertaken was electronic balloting. Within the hour you have the results, and people know who the winner is and people are able to celebrate, media are able to report, and most of us who watch those election results from home are able to go to bed.

When we look at this, I think it's important that we bring in modern technology, which is why the Progressive Conservative Party and our caucus will support this legislation. But I think it's important that we continue to talk about this. Any time we talk about changing voting or we talk about changing financing for elections, that must be done quite carefully, and it must be done in consultation with the Chief Electoral Officer of the province of Ontario.

I say that because not only is it critical, as my colleague from Oxford earlier pointed out and my other colleague from Huron-Bruce, to ensure that there's a vast majority of people being consulted on this—I think they said there were 16 people put on a panel or through a consultation. I don't think that is sufficient when you're changing the way people vote in the province of Ontario, which is also important, why we have this opportunity to speak today.

It's not a controversial bill, but I do think it's important that the government allows the opposition to bring up our views throughout this process without invoking closure. And I'll tell you why, Speaker: When it comes to our voting in this province, it is fundamental that we respect the views and the ideas of everyone, but that we also make sure that it's ironclad and that we pass the best bill moving forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from Windsor-Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Why, thank you, Speaker, and good afternoon to you.

I'm a little bit troubled this afternoon. My good friend from Beaches-East York, as I heard him, just admitted that he goes into high schools recruiting young people to join his youth wing. The member for Scarborough Southwest, the parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General, first stood up when the bill was introduced and

he basically said, “Move along. There’s nothing to see here. We’re not doing anything wrong.” But he didn’t say it once, he didn’t say it twice, he said it three times, so I got a little bit suspicious.

And now I hear a member, the member from Beaches–East York, say he’s already recruiting young people in the schools to join his youth wing. When we start to pre-register 16- and 17-year-olds, the perception could be that it’s a Liberal recruiting tool to get lots of young voters into the Liberal fold. That makes me a little bit nervous. It’s just something to keep in the back of my mind.

1700

I know the bill does not include any provisions for Internet voting, despite some people believing it does, but I will say that 97 of Ontario’s 444 municipalities used Internet voting in their last municipal election. If it’s safe and secure for municipal politicians in Ontario, why can’t we use the technology that’s out there? Why can’t we do it on a broader scale? We make a big deal of saying our tech-savvy industry is very good, and it is, and yet they are turning their backs on the technocrats and saying we can’t trust them.

It makes me a little bit nervous, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Coteau: It’s a pleasure to speak on Bill 45, the Election Statute Law Amendment Act. I want to start by saying that I was excited when this amendment came forward to the Election Act, because it recognized the importance of young people in our democratic system. I know the minister responsible for accessibility and women’s issues spoke a lot about the youth component of this amendment to the legislation that would, if passed, allow for 16- and 17-year-olds to pre-register for an election.

What we need to be doing is encouraging young people to get out there and vote. If in the last election only 34% went out and actually voted, could you imagine if that number was reflective of maybe the seniors’ vote, which is in the 75% or 80% margin? The election results would have been very different than what we saw in the last election.

I know when I get out to schools—I go out to grade 5 civics classes, grade 10 classes—I ask the question always, “If you could be part of the process earlier, would you want that?” And a lot of young people respond in a very positive way. We know that if you’re involved in politics as a young person, you’re more likely throughout life to participate in the democratic process.

When we think about the issues that we debate in this Legislature, issues around education, health care, the environment, jobs and the economy, obviously they affect all people across Ontario, but young people have a particular interest in those areas. I think it’s important for them to be part of that process to make sure that their representation is reflective of their current needs and that, as they age, the policy that we put in place benefits not only the community as a whole, but them as young

people, as they grow into responsible adults who have families and want to contribute back to the economy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to commend all the presenters. Obviously, we split that 20 minutes up pretty finely, so it would take all my two minutes to name them all.

A couple of issues were brought up. One was the boundaries commission that the bill is proposing to put in place in northern Ontario. Mr. Speaker, you will know that in southern Ontario, the second election after a government serves 10 years, they do a boundary adjustment in the province, including northern Ontario. Provincially, we accept that everywhere except in northern Ontario. For the last three elections, we’ve had different boundaries in southern Ontario than in northern Ontario. But northern Ontario hasn’t been adjusted in all that time.

It seems appropriate that we put a boundary adjustment commission in place, but why would we not have them look at northern Ontario generally to see if the number of seats there should be realigned, or the boundaries should be aligned to better accommodate the population growth, or lack of growth, or to change them because of the geographic size of some of them? I cannot see why you would put up this whole commission and direct them on what the results have to be when they finish, based on two ridings. They can take two ridings and they can make them four ridings or they can make them three ridings or they can recommend they stay the same, but they can’t touch any of the other ones. It would seem to me much more practical and productive if we could look at that in total for the north.

The other thing is that we keep hearing about how the bill is meant to try and encourage people to vote. As I read the bill, there is nothing to encourage people to vote, save and except maybe the fact that young people can register and be ready to vote when the time comes. With more understanding of that, they may utilize that more. But having fewer polling stations and having fewer advance polls is not going to increase participation; it’s going to decrease participation, especially in rural Ontario, because we can’t get to the polls when they’re open.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to— whoever—yes. There we have it. We have the member from Beaches–East York for final comments.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker. I just so much appreciate your enthusiasm when you recognize my riding. It brings warmth to my heart.

I do want to thank my colleagues the member from Barrie and the minister for women’s issues and accessibility for their comments and their debate on the bill, and the member from Nepean–Carleton reinforcing, once again, the position of her party to be supporting this, particularly the piece around electronic voting, which is going to make it easier for people to vote, which is going to encourage people to vote, which is pretty much the answer that I’d like to give to the member from Oxford—

and I appreciate his remarks as well. The northern boundary commission: I would just like to say that I think our side of the House has heard very clearly the impassioned plea from his nephew, the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, that there may be some other issues that need to be explored on that commission. We'll have to see how far we can go with that.

I'd also like to thank the Minister of Children and Youth Services—such a passionate inspirer of youth in the province. I know that he's very supportive of this bill, as much for that reason as any other.

Finally, to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh: I'm a little surprised that he would find criticism in me being out there engaging with youth in the province, particularly in my own riding in the high schools, because he knows me as being a man of integrity. I'm not out there as the Liberal; I'm out there as the member of provincial Parliament. But I'm in the civics class and I explain to the kids, I explain to these young students, how the public process works. I do encourage them to get involved—to get involved with any party, but just to be involved. The key message is always to get involved, to do your democratic duty, to get out and vote.

I had an opportunity with my daughter Robin when she came with me once to the ballot box. I think she was eight years old. It was Dennis Mills versus Jack Layton. I showed her the ballot, and she was about to, with the pencil, put in Jack Layton's name. I said, “Well, wait a second. You're not entitled to vote, but you can assist me in my vote.” So we were able to vote for Dennis Mills.

Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate your time.

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

I recognize the minister.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: We would like to continue the debate, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I want to say thank you, obviously, to my colleague from Ottawa, the minister of franco-phone affairs, for allowing us to continue the debate. As I said in a previous statement in debate on this bill, I think that whenever we're talking about the process of electing members to this House, if we're talking about financing campaigns to campaign for this place, we should have a fulsome debate, with all members having the opportunity to speak. I'm grateful to have that opportunity.

My colleague from Oxford, when he spoke to Bill 45, talked about when Canadian troops went to his parents' homeland, and how excited they were to see Canadian soldiers liberate them. It's never too far from my mind, Speaker, that when I get to sit in this Legislature—and I still do it after being here almost 11 years, where I'll look up to the ceiling and how magnificent it is, and I think

about the people who sacrificed, not only to build this structure, but the people who sacrificed to ensure that we have freedom.

I had a statement not too long ago—I guess it was a year ago—where we talked about the time when the Ontario Legislature was first created. Women didn't have the right to vote. There was no diversity in ethnicity, with the exception of likely the difference between Protestant and Catholic.

1710

Today, a hundred years later, or even more than that, we see women in unprecedented numbers—our Premier, our Deputy Premier and the leader of the third party, all females. We see great diversity. Literally, many of the cultures, linguistic backgrounds and ethnicities that have come to Ontario and Canada over past decades can now find themselves represented in this assembly, and we take that sometimes, I think, for granted.

When we talk about the electoral process and when we talk about how we elect MPPs, I think it's critically important that we have a full debate, that we engage the Chief Electoral Officer and we engage the public on how to make things easy and accessible but also ironclad, so that the integrity of the process is never put into question.

Over the years that I've had the opportunity to be in this Legislature—and I find it to be a profound privilege to be able to take my seat here and, as Tim Hudak said when he departed this place, have this microphone and be able to use it. I think the freedom and the flexibility and the openness that I have with this microphone and the ability for me to stand up and vote up one side and down the other, depending on how it is, comes to me because people sacrificed. They believed in a system that is the most beautiful in the world in terms of governance, which is democracy, and people fought and many people died in order for us to maintain those freedoms.

It is important at any given time that we talk about the process, as we did in 2007, when we considered a citizenship referendum, and we considered changing the electoral system, as we have done, and I will talk a little bit about the new election financing rules that will change things. I think it's important that we have an honest and open discussion, but one with the interest not on the members who are sitting in this assembly but the members we hope to bring to this assembly in the next generation.

I'm proud to have created a program in my constituency called Girls in Government and Leadership. It's something I had thought about. I had worked with Equal Voice, which, as you know, is a multi-partisan organization dedicated to getting more women involved in public policy, politics and political life.

I came up with the idea, and the take that we've done with it is that about a year ago, around this time of year, we had a Christmas parade in Barrhaven and my daughter's hockey team joined my float. Afterwards, we had chili and hot chocolate. I invited all the young girls over to my office. They sat at my desk and they played government.

It was profound for me because those girls were in grade 5 and they understood fundamentally what it meant to be in government. Some of them thought they were ministers or the President. They got a little confused between Canada and the United States; they didn't know the difference between the court of law and political life in terms of elections. But I think what was profound for me was that they understood enough. They knew that my office, to them, was government, that government was there for a reason, and that when those two flags are behind the desk, that Canadian flag and that Ontario flag are behind that desk, it's official.

So I decided what I would do a couple of months later was create this Girls in Government and Leadership. I worked with local schools. The three schools I worked with initially were Kars on the Rideau Public School, Metcalfe Public School and my own daughter's Manordale Public School. What we did was, we had a carousel approach where we brought in women who were leaders in their field, including myself as a member of provincial Parliament, but we brought in women from non-traditional career backgrounds. We had firefighters; we had police; we had people who were involved with social media. We had a senator, Marjory LeBreton; a city councillor, Jan Harder; and of course myself.

I taught the girls how to be an MPP in 40 minutes. I showed them how to analyze, to read, to assess, to communicate and collaborate, and then present an issue of the day. For me, Speaker, I think it was important for them to understand the process that we go through each and every day here in the Legislature.

But the next step, of course, is ensuring that those girls are engaged and that those girls see themselves not only as the next MPP or the next Premier of Ontario, but that they also see themselves in those other roles, whether that's in the trades, whether that is policing, whether that is with paramedics or with fire. And in order for them to do that, in order for them to take the next step in civics, I think it's important that we do what this bill is suggesting, which is getting young people to start registering to vote at an earlier age. The suggestion here is 16. I talked to my colleague our House leader and former leader Jim Wilson from Simcoe-Grey, and he talked about going into a school last week with older kids—not grades 5 or 6 but older kids—and they were excited about the prospect of being engaged.

I think now, as we look—it's presidential election season south of the border. People are very much aware of this being an election. I think many people around Ontario right now are looking at provincial politics. We have two by-elections going on, and another by-election—Sudbury, which took place a year ago—is in the news of course again today with the alleged bribery allegations. So I think the fact is that the electoral process is newsworthy. It is something that has excited people and has, I think, intrigued the next generation. So I think it's important that we have this conversation.

I also want to talk a little bit about the fact that we're going to consider vote-counting equipment and electronic

voting. To me, this is long overdue. I know we had a pilot project in Whitby-Oshawa. There were a couple of hiccups, I can tell you, having gone door to door and having done some scrutineering in that by-election. I did that, of course, Speaker—you'll understand—for Lorne Coe, whom I call the Trudeau slayer for having won that by-election handily despite the fact that Justin Trudeau was in that riding, I believe, at least three times.

In any event, I know there were a couple of hiccups because it happened at the poll that I was at. However, I believe that the integrity of the process was true. I know, having had the opportunity to speak with the executive director of the Progressive Conservative Party, that they felt that it went well.

Speaker, more importantly, and I mentioned this earlier in the debate, when the city of Ottawa amalgamated in 2000, we used electronic voting—a little machine smaller than my desk, where you tick off the box and it goes right into the machine. The results are tabulated within 10 minutes. People know who has won the election within an hour of polls closing. I think that's beneficial for a variety of reasons. When we come to this assembly, we do so to assemble freely. We have freedom of speech, and a critical part of freedom of speech is also having a free press. I think it's important for the free press to be able to report on the outcome of an election so that people can know almost instantaneously who their next MPP is and who their next Premier is.

I can tell you, Speaker, we're not alone. There have been many nights where we have waited late into the evening to find out who the next government will be, who the next member will be, and sometimes it took recounts.

I want to recount the 2011 election. Speaker, I remember you being elected in that election as the class of 2011.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It was a good class.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: We had a good class. That is so true, as I say to the minister.

But what was incredible was that I remember being at the Barrhaven Legion that night. I had won with over 50% of the vote, so it wasn't really a product of whether I was going to win or not. We knew that we had succeeded. However, the balance of power hung that night for hours—hours upon hours—and it hung that night for hours because Rosario Marchese, who was a New Democrat, had run against Sarah Thomson, who was a Liberal, and the results that night went back and forth and back and forth, so that I didn't know when I gave my victory speech whether or not there was a minority Parliament or a majority Parliament.

I just think that when you look at this bill and what it will do—it will allow us to have electronic voting, and we'll know the results and there will be a great deal of integrity in that process. I think that's important.

I use the 2011 election as an example, one that I don't think will be repeated with this legislation.

I have a few moments left and I want to address not only the Election Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016, this Bill 45. There are discussions about changing fundraising

rules in the province. If we're going to talk about democracy, we have to talk about elections, and if you're going to talk about elections in Canada, you have to talk about democracy. One of the things that I'm concerned with when we have two pieces of legislation dealing with the election process and election financing is that the Chief Electoral Officer be part of this process, as I said earlier.

1720

I was shocked earlier today to learn that the Chief Electoral Officer, Greg Essensa, had not been consulted on the election financing bill. I think that's very important for us to raise in this assembly because, unlike this bill, where we will have the opportunity to do something that's done not only in North America but also here in Ontario with a great big city like Ottawa, the nation's capital and my hometown, he said, with respect to banning MPPs from fundraising, as the government wants to do, that that has not been done anywhere in North America. He has no example whatsoever of that ever being done. He believes it will create a major burden on political parties, it will create a major burden on nominated candidates and it will be almost impossible to police.

When you're putting forward a piece of major legislation like that, not only is it critical that you consult with people, but it is critical that you have input from members of this assembly who have experienced the electoral process. But more importantly, the independent arbiter of our elections should be consulted. He should have the ability to make recommendations, and that isn't what is happening here.

Speaker, I grew up in a small town, New Glasgow, Nova Scotia. I know you're probably tired of hearing that. I've said this for the past decade. The town was 10,000 people when I left. There are about 9,900 people left there—not a lot of jobs, and people moved to Ontario, Alberta and other places to find jobs. But it's a lovely place.

I grew up, much like my colleague Mr. Potts, admiring the work of my own father, who was elected for three decades. He was deputy mayor; he was a police commissioner; he was the campaign manager to John Hamm, who was Premier of Nova Scotia, and Peter MacKay, who was the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and then minister of defence. My dad was my hero. He passed away in 2007.

One of the things that I love most about politics and that I still love most about politics is people. I think you know, Speaker, that I love to give people hugs. I have a very east coast feel to me, as many people say. The Speaker points to his heart knowing I sometimes wear my heart on my sleeve.

One of the things I loved when I was growing up and going to political events with my father is that, yes, people felt they had an ability to provide ownership in the political campaign in their community because they paid their \$50 for the lobster do; you'll get the Nova Scotia reference there—the lobster do. It was an oppor-

tunity for the member or the candidate to give a speech to the party faithful. At the same time, they felt like they were buying stock in that campaign.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Vested.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Nothing wrong; they have a vested interest.

Don't ever confuse that, in my opinion, with the cash-for-access scheme that people abuse in terms of a minister of the crown selling a \$10,000 appointment for a contract. That doesn't happen in Nepean–Carleton and it didn't happen in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, which was called Central Nova or Pictou–Antigonish–Guysborough or, in the provincial riding, Pictou Centre—no.

Back when I was growing up, my cousin, who was Premier of Nova Scotia, Donald Cameron, represented Pictou East; Jack MacIsaac, Pictou Centre; and Donald McInnes, Pictou West—the three Pictous they were called—all three of them cabinet ministers, and my cousin became Premier. Not one of them ever decided they were going to abuse this cash-for-access scheme with the party faithful. No, it was an opportunity once or twice a year to give a state-of-the-union address to your people, to talk about the issues you were fighting for, to remain connected, and for them to invest in your campaign. That is how you build a war chest, but it's also how you build an effective campaign.

If we're going to change those rules, we strike at the heart of the democratic institution we have here today, and I don't support it. I also don't support this notion that the taxpayers of Ontario should be funding political campaigns. What bothers me with this is, we've gone to a communal aspect and the reality is, in my opinion anyhow, if I want to donate \$50 to the member from Simcoe–Grey, that's because I want to do that.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Noted.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I guess I have to get my chequebook out before I leave today.

But if I don't want to donate to the minister for children and youth, I don't have to. But the way the system is, that's the way it's going to go. That is my fundamental belief, and I have a microphone here and the freedom to use it. That's why I want that on the record, Speaker, because I find it's very insulting to the people of my constituency that they are told that they have to contribute to this system.

I don't have, personally, a problem with the union and the corporate donations. I do have an issue with third-party advertising. But that's my personal belief. That isn't—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Point of order

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Point of order. I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This is Bill 45, Mr. Speaker. It is about voter registration and voter improvement. Can we actually debate the bill?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. I've been listening carefully, and she's tying it in. Please continue.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I appreciate the intervention. I know it's something that the government probably doesn't want to talk about, but it excites me.

It's one of the things that, when I see Progressive Conservatives across Ontario, I talk to them about, the election financing bill, just as I talk to them about Bill 45. I talk to them about the changes that are going to be fundamental for the 2018 election. That's what's critical. That's what these rule changes are about. It's about the 2018 election, how we elect MPPs and how we finance them. I believe they're one and the same.

I believe the people of Ontario have an opportunity right now to send their displeasure to the government, but they also deserve to hear the debate. They should also know what the implications will be for this legislation and other legislation that's just like it. When I speak to Progressive Conservatives, I can tell them all about Bill 45, and I can tell them all about Bill 2.

It's critical, because I have been spending a great deal of time in Ottawa–Vanier with the former Ontario Ombudsman, André Marin, who is just doing a great job at the doors, I can tell you. It's huge. He's going a great job.

I'm going to do down, hopefully, on Wednesday to Niagara West–Glanbrook. A 19-year-old young man wants to run for the Progressive Conservative Party. What about generational change? I can tell you something, Speaker: This is great. The government wants 16-year olds involved in the process, so what so we do? We've got a 19-year-old who is going to be the youngest member of provincial Parliament ever elected—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Wow, to realize that some of the heckling was coming from members who aren't even sitting in their seats. My goodness sakes, I believe she might have been encouraged by the one sitting beside her in the seat she's occupying.

I will now turn it back over for—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Speaker. Again, in the 30 seconds I have left, I want Sam Oosterhoff to know that he has the 100% support of the Progressive Conservative caucus as we debate Bill 45 and trying to get young people of the age of 16 engaged in the process. I'm so excited that the youngest member of the Ontario Legislature ever will be elected on November 17 in Niagara West–Glanbrook. Sam Oosterhoff is the name.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Well, Speaker, things are really heating up this afternoon, I must say.

To comment on the member from Nepean–Carleton, who had a wonderfully free-ranging discussion, a lot of it had to do with waiting for election results. It was funny. I know the members on the other side didn't hear the private conversation that the member for Essex and I had with the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. When she was talking about the election results in 2011, Mr. Yakabuski turned over and said, "What time do the polls close?" I said, "Nine o'clock." He said, "When do

you think I was declared a winner?" I said, "9:02?" He said, "No, 8:58." So I went to Google, Speaker, and I believe him because in 2011 he got 71% of the vote and 21,000 votes over the Liberal, I think. In 2014 he's going down. He only got 61% of the vote. Although he got 25,000 votes—4,000 more—the Liberals got a couple more thousand, but they're still way, way behind.

1730

I know we should be talking about vote-tabulating machines, as they tried them when Mr. Coe was elected in the by-election of Whitby–Oshawa. Vote-tabulating machines have been used by municipalities in municipal elections right across the province. I know we used one in Windsor the last time. I was telling people the other day that we rented them from an American supplier. The beauty about that was when you voted, on the screen up came the American flag, waving in the breeze, and it said, "Thank you for voting." I suppose next time, it will have a picture of President Trump saying, "Thank you for voting."

Speaker, thank you for listening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This is about getting more young people involved in politics, because there's only a 34% turnout. There are many good ideas.

People should never be discriminated against based on their age. The member from Nepean–Carleton made the point that there is a young person running there. I'm glad the whole Tory caucus supports this silenced young man, who hasn't been able to find his voice yet.

But I will say something really serious: For some of us, debates, like elections, will probably bring a lot of young people out. On the eve of the AIDS epidemic, when I was in school, there was no discussion of gays, homosexuality, AIDS or sexuality. A lot of my friends died in their 20s because they were invisible. They were invisible. Young transgender, gay and lesbian youth have a right to have their families visible within an election.

I think there are going to be a lot of young people coming out in Niagara West–Glanbrook and voting against the Tory party, which doesn't believe that transgender, gay or lesbian people—or proper information that young people can have to protect themselves from things like the AIDS epidemic.

I'm glad that you support this position of an extreme right-wing, alt-right Republican kind of politics, because the member is right: You will catalyze a lot of interest in Niagara, because my family and lots of families here find that intolerant and find it bigoted. In a public school system, I and my family have as much right to be as visible as the member for Nepean–Carleton.

I have challenged her on her views of gay and lesbian people before, and she is dismissive of them. But she just gave me another reason to be concerned that your whole party supports Mr. Oosterhoff's view. Good on you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Jim Wilson: I think people across the way are just making things up, Mr. Speaker. Sam Oosterhoff is a very decent, very principled young man who has done nothing to offend you, Minister, so I don't understand it at all. He's going to win the by-election. He'll be the youngest MPP in Ontario's history, and it will help to literally transform our party.

I was elected at a young age—not that young, I admit, but 27 years of age and very proud of it. Federally, I remember, Jean Charest was one of the youngest federal MPs. I had the pleasure of working for three years with the Honourable Perrin Beatty when he was Minister of National Defence and Minister of Health. He was elected at 22.

“We're not going to elect someone at 19.” Talk about the party of youth, the party of renewal, the party of hope, the party that will truly build Ontario up with the views of young people in our caucus—and I look forward to it very much.

Speaking of young people, Mr. Speaker, the honourable member from Nepean–Carleton, my great colleague, friend and seatmate—I mentioned that I had been at a high school, Nottawasaga Pines Secondary School, last Friday at the invitation of the teacher. The class was the grade 11 and 12 leadership class students. Stephanie Crier—a wonderful teacher there. They're very excited—a compliment to the government—that they will be able to register soon, at age 16. They know they won't be able to vote until age 18, but they're thinking, as leadership class students, that that might help get their peers interested and talking to each other about getting their driver's licence and, at the same time, talking to each other about perhaps getting registered.

My question is, how are they going to do that? They want to do it online, but I said to them, “You will probably have to do it in person at some point, because the government will want to see that you're actually a person,” as we do for Nexus programs, passports and other things—well, not passports, but other things. So that's a question the government needs to answer in the days ahead.

But you look out for our Niagara by-election. It's going to wipe you guys off the map.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I can only imagine that this is what debate would look like if we sat on Fridays, because we have descended into something that is totally out of the realm of what I would typically call normal debate. It's turned into a little bit of an infomercial for each side to promote their candidate. And, of course, it speaks a little bit to the arrogance that people sense comes out of this place.

We can't take voters for granted. We have to put forward good policy. It should be about the ideas that we bring to make our province a better place, and not simply, “Your guy is worse than my guy,” which we see across the other side.

Speaker, the bill doesn't do that. That's the question. That's the test that we should be bringing forward in this

debate, not the partisan rhetoric that we have seen this debate descend into in the last 20 minutes.

Ultimately, the number one thing we can do as legislators in this province is to take these ideas back to our communities, for them to be fully and wholly engaged in the process. We've seen, for a long time, the electorate, and constituents in particular, not feel as though they are part of the grand picture of this place. It's something that we can definitely improve on.

I hope that this bill gets a broad overview by the people in our communities, because they are the ones that are going to have to live with the ramifications of any changes to our electoral system going forward. We can descend into partisan rhetoric here, but let's not forget the people that sent us here, because this is what it's all about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Nepean–Carleton for final comments.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Again, an excellent opportunity to participate in this debate. I appreciate speaking on Bill 45.

Look, in Ontario today we have more people disenfranchised than we've ever had. They look at a government that is under not one, not two, not three, not four, but five OPP investigations, five criminal investigations. Just today, the deputy chief of staff to the Premier of Ontario was charged under the Ontario Election Act.

This isn't the first time it has happened, because this is now the second consecutive deputy chief of staff that has been charged and is undergoing criminal investigation—Laura Miller, because of the cancelled gas plants.

We have seen unprecedented cash-for-access fundraising, a scheme that was abusive to the process in Ontario, and we have now seen a government want to cut off the opposition's opportunity to fundraise. So here we are, talking about Bill 45, trying to get more people involved and engaged in the process at a younger age, yet it's at a time when we have seen the government become so arrogant and out of touch and detached from the people that they represent, which is why Patrick Brown continues to win by-elections.

Speaker, the government can try and attack us. They can try and shut down our voices and muzzle us. But we're going to use the tools in Bill 45 to ensure that the next generation has their voice heard, and so do their parents and their grandparents, so that we can actually have good government in this province for once, for the first time in 14 years.

June 7, 2018: That will be the day that we will have a better government. It will be a day that we engage more people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. Good afternoon to you. Once again, it's a humbling experience to be called upon by you to speak for Windsor–Tecumseh residents.

We're here today because the Wynne Liberal government wants to make changes in the way we hold

provincial elections. I note that the Wynne Liberals are interested in the work done by the province's Chief Electoral Officer in the by-election in Whitby–Oshawa. As you know, they experimented with vote-counting equipment there and it worked rather well.

1740

As I recall, though, Speaker, the Chief Electoral Officer wrote up a report on his experience that recommended the Wynne Liberals authorize him to start this process before we broke for the summer in June, nearly five months ago. He said that he needed an immediate answer, that time was of the essence. There was no time to waste: Equipment had to be ordered and people had to be trained. That was no small feat. It couldn't happen in a rush. He said that it had to have been started five months ago.

Well, the Wynne Liberals are certainly showing Ontario's Chief Electoral Officer who's in charge around here. They can drag their feet all they want. Their arrogance knows no bounds.

Speaker, as you know, the next provincial election, which many people are anxiously awaiting, will, upon passing of this bill, as we just heard, be held on Thursday, June 7, 2018. In case you're counting the days, Speaker, that's 583 days away; or one year, seven months and seven days; or 83 weeks and two days. Speaker, I know you're mindful of the time, so let me put it this way: June 7, 2018, is 13,992 hours away; or, if you like, 839,520 minutes; or, Speaker, if you have a second, that would be 50,371,200 seconds. But who's counting? Actually, quite a few people are counting, Speaker, as you may well know.

Timing is everything, or so they say, whoever "they" are. Anyway, if they can pull off a miracle, I guess we will have vote-counting equipment in every riding in 2018. The Chief Electoral Officer says that this will save paper, be more efficient and put a whole bunch of people out of jobs. The Wynne Liberals see this as a good thing. I know dozens of people who look forward to working the election for a bit of spending money, but fewer of them will be needed when they're replaced by a machine. I guess you could say, Speaker, that the Wynne Liberals are broadening the ownership of the electoral process by not offering as many jobs to the folks who used to be poll clerks. If they're going to put them out of work, why don't they put them to work as enumerators fixing up the voters list? More on that later.

They'll be adopting what they label the technology-enabled staffing model, which they promise will provide a faster and more convenient experience for voters. At least, that's the way the government House leader describes it. As the former member for Trinity–Spadina, Mr. Marchese, would say—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: God bless.

Mr. Percy Hatfield:—God bless.

I do note that the Wynne Liberals, as they enter this new age of technology-based voting procedure and the so-called technology-based staffing model, stopped short of allowing the more tech-savvy potential voters to do so

online. The Attorney General says, "While it's an exciting idea, this is not something that the Chief Electoral Officer has recommended, given the current technology that is available."

Apparently, between 2010 and 2012, the Chief Electoral Officer studied options for Internet voting of various sorts and found that none of the options currently available would sufficiently protect the integrity of our voting system. That amazes me. You could say that I'm flabbergasted. For one thing, the last time they looked at the options was four years ago. Technology gets updated these days every four months or four weeks or, in some cases, four days. But four years ago, they weren't convinced.

Speaker, to your riding, what does that say to the good folks in the municipality of Leamington? Leamington, in the last municipal election, became the first municipality in Ontario to run a municipal election entirely online, over the Internet. They embrace technology in Leamington. They obviously believe in it. And it's obvious that the Wynne Liberal government—despite all its talk about what great, innovative people and companies and colleges and universities we have—has turned its back on these innovative people and their ideas, and proclaimed them as unworthy of developing the technology to allow us to vote over the Internet in the 21st century.

In case you weren't aware of it, Speaker, municipalities in Ontario have used Internet voting since 2003. Ninety-seven of the 444 municipalities in Ontario embraced the technology of Internet voting in 2014. They coupled it with other options such as mail-in ballots, voting over the telephone or polling stations with paper ballots, but they weren't afraid of voting over the Internet. In Kingsville, I know they voted by phone as well as the Internet. In Chatham-Kent, they encouraged Internet voting in all of the advance polls prior to election day.

Municipalities see it as a proven, reliable service. Their experience has shown it provides both a fair and secure process. It's more convenient and accessible for many voters and, in many cases, less expensive, let alone it's more environmentally friendly than the paper ballots. This is 2016, after all, as the Liberal leader who takes all the selfies in Ottawa is prone to say.

In the old days of just the paper ballot and the polling station, it wasn't uncommon in Leamington to have a 30% turnout in municipal elections. When they went to mail-in ballots, that turnout jumped to 50%. On their very first attempt at Internet-only voting, Leamington, Ontario, recorded a voter turnout of 43%. By comparison, in Windsor, with our various polling stations and vote-tabulating machines, we only had a turnout of 37%. That's certainly nothing to brag about.

Now, there were some glitches in Leamington; a few people complained. Human error was to blame for a delay in getting the results. Still, that's pretty good, don't you think? The only way you could vote for your municipal leaders in Leamington, the tomato capital of Canada, in the last municipal election was over the Internet and the voter turnout was 43%. They appear to be willing to

do Internet voting again, maybe next time coupling it with another method, just to make up for those still unfamiliar with computers and perhaps improve their voter turnout. I say good for Leamington and the leadership they're showing in that municipality.

I must say, I am almost certain I speak for practically every member of this House when I say that the biggest problem with running a provincial election is the voters list. It's hardly worth the paper it's printed on.

I was reading a post-election report prepared for the town of Leamington just yesterday, Speaker. As you know, MPAC, the Municipal Property Assessment Corp., prepares the preliminary list of voters in our ridings. Municipal employees and election officials then spend a considerable amount of time correcting the errors on the MPAC list. I had to laugh because this report said that the best the municipal folks can do in trying to correct the MPAC list is taking it from something they labelled as a "terrible job" and turning in something that would still, I suppose, in a perfect world, be considered "unacceptable." The best MPAC could do for Leamington was to turn over a voters list they thought was perhaps 66% accurate. For whatever reason, MPAC doesn't seem to be able to improve on their accuracy.

The association of clerks and treasurers is currently pushing for reform, but, according to the Leamington report I've just referenced, it remains to be seen if the province is ready to commit the resources to improve the situation. That's why I say, if they're going to vote-tabulating machines and they're going to be laying off hundreds of people or not calling them back from the past election, turn them out as enumerators. Get them going door to door and get a really good voters list. That would help everybody.

The Wynne Liberals want to be seen as improving the way they run elections in Ontario. If you do, why don't we see anything here about improving the voters list? I hope, when they respond to what I'm saying this afternoon, we'll hear from them on this point.

One of the key planks in this election statute law, Bill 45, is to stimulate voter turnout. I don't see anything in here about telephone voting.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I've got 10 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'm not done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Your time is up, I'm sorry.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: How come? It's only 10 to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It was a 10-minute—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It was a 10-minute hit?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It was.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Oh. Why didn't you tell me before I started?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): That's why we have clocks, sir.

Questions and comments?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'm delighted to yet again add my voice to this debate and in particular respond to some of the comments made by the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

1750

But before that, I do want to address some of the comments made by the members from Nepean–Carleton and Simcoe–Grey. It's unfortunate the member from Nepean–Carleton isn't here.

I applaud the fact that the party opposite is delighted that they have a 19-year-old candidate, but there is some irony in that boasting, because they have silenced this 19-year-old. They don't trust the 19-year-old candidate to speak. You can't at once be proud of the fact that you have a 19-year-old candidate but not trust him enough to even let him speak. It's unprecedented. It's 17 days before an election and I haven't heard his voice. I just wanted to put that on the record.

With respect to some of the comments the member from Windsor–Tecumseh made, I just wanted to say that I know he has raised the issue of execution risk, and that has been raised a few times. I just wanted to clarify a couple of things.

First, the execution of all of this will be done by Elections Ontario, not the Ontario government. The second piece I did want to highlight is that Elections Ontario has tested the use of this technology in the 2016 Whitby–Oshawa by-election, and I have here in my notes that the Chief Electoral Officer documented the success and reflected on the learnings of that experience in his extensive post-event report, saying that the machines worked flawlessly.

So we have confidence, Mr. Speaker, in Elections Ontario, that they will be able to execute the switch from our current system of voting to a more modern version that includes electronic voting. As I had previously alluded to, we do have the backup, so that should something not work, the paper ballot will still be available. I look forward to a much-overdue modernization of the way we elect in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'd just say to you, Speaker, that the minister of seniors' affairs had some interesting comments over there about our young candidate. Yes, he's young, but Sam Oosterhoff is a very confident, principled young man. I think he'd probably agree with us that registering young people at age 16 is going to be a good thing—a good experiment, anyway; we'll see how that goes. As I said, I was at a class at Nottawasaga Pines Secondary School last Friday, a grade 11-12 leadership class; Stephanie Cryer is the teacher. They were pretty excited about that, but they wanted to know how that was going to happen.

But if you haven't heard from our candidate in Niagara West–Glanbrook, go to CHCH TV. They have a wonderful, extensive interview that they did with him just recently. Eventually he will continue to deal with the media and to address the issues, but he's doing that door

to door right now. I recommend you people get off your butts and do the same, frankly.

Interjections.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Well, if you want to even be competitive down there, you've got to go talk to people about their hydro bills. Confront them at the door and say, "Hey, how's your hydro bill?" and just see how welcome you're going to be down there. It was hard to find a Liberal, I am told by our canvassers, last weekend.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock. I just want to remind everyone in the Legislature that what we are referring our questions and comments to is to the speech that has been made. Anything that deviates from that will be deemed—you will be corrected.

I'll go back to the member from Simcoe–Grey to continue, but the reminder has been sent out. Back to the member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister for seniors' affairs didn't really refer to the member for Windsor–Tecumseh, so I was just continuing the trend. But nonetheless, I respect the Chair. I was Deputy Speaker myself for a few years, and it was the best job I ever had, by the way, in this Legislature.

Anyway, I just wanted to say—nothing, because I have three seconds left. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to add some comments to those of my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh. It's always great: He's diligent in his homework. He does his homework; he understands the bill. He understands the ramifications.

He highlighted some of the issues, one of which was the tabulating machines. Let's be clear here on what the bill has in it. We're not moving to a new method of online voting. That's not here, but there is a method of counting the votes, which will be tabulating machines.

He has made the suggestion, which I think is quite reasonable, that those tabulating machines, if they are to be brought in, will displace some of those workers. Let's take those workers who have historically worked elections—we all know who they are. We get to name them as workers in the campaigns or in the elections. Let's get them doing some enumerating, which is a vital part of having an updated, comprehensive list to ensure that all political parties can connect with those voters, let them know what our platforms are and, of course, extend ourselves through the democratic process to get them to vote.

We all struggle, as I'm sure you have, Speaker, with lists that are less than accurate, that have outdated names. You almost feel embarrassed going to a door with a list with someone on it who may have moved or, even worse, may have died. That's stuff that we all struggle with, and I think it's something that the province could definitely make some improvement on.

So, while we have the bill in front of us, let's try to clean up some of those areas where it may escape the

basis of the bill, but we can actually find some consensus around something practical, as the member from Windsor–Tecumseh has proposed, to make our system a little bit easier for everyone.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to comment on Bill 45. One of the things that is really exciting about Bill 45 is that we're giving some thought to the issue of voter turnout, and particularly voter turnout amongst young people. In the last election, it was 34% of young people who were old enough to vote who actually cast a ballot. What I've always found interesting in my experience is, young people are actually really, really thoughtful.

For example, when I was chair of the Safe Schools Action Team, we were consulting on safe schools, but particularly when we did our third report, which was on gender-based violence, homophobia and sexual harassment, we talked to students, and students actually gave us some wonderful advice. It was students who reinforced what the research said about the really negative impact of homophobia in schools, when homophobia is allowed to flourish in schools and—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. I sent out a warning just a few moments ago—not a warning but an advisory that what we are debating here and the questions and comments need to pertain to what the member from Windsor–Tecumseh spoke about. So I would ask that your comments would be pertaining to what he had spoken about. Thank you very much.

Hon. Liz Sandals: As we spoke to students, they were able to inform the policy. That's what we really want students to understand, that students can help inform political decisions—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

Hon. Liz Sandals: —that students need to be engaged in politics just like older people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Back to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for final comments.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I thank you, Speaker. I'd like to say to the President of the Treasury Board and former Minister of Education, on political decisions—I told her earlier today that I thanked her for all of the hard work she put into getting a new Catholic high school on the old Windsor Arena site in Windsor, and I thank the new Minister of Education, Ms. Hunter, today for providing the funding for that as well.

I heard my friends in the Conservative caucus talking about their 19-year-old candidate. I think it's interesting that we'll have a young person running in Niagara West–Glanbrook. Then I heard my friends in the Liberal caucus say, "Let him speak. Let him speak." Apparently he hasn't done any interviews yet.

Interjection.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: He finally did one today. He hasn't talked to the Toronto media yet or the people who cover Queen's Park. He's been hiding and his mother has

been doing interviews for him. I find that interesting. I look forward to our candidate, Mike Thomas, a retired policeman, winning that riding for us. I know the Liberals won't, because hydro is an issue, and if you're running on a hydro platform in Ontario, no matter what party you're running on—there's one party that won't be getting any votes, and that's the party that has been raising hydro rates.

So you can chip away and chirp away all you want, when you talk about who's going to win a riding, but it won't be a Liberal in that riding, and I'll bet money on it, Speaker—not that I usually bet on elections.

I would say, though, to the Minister of Economic Development and Growth, that we have technology

experts in this province, and we should be encouraging them to come up with a hack-proof voting system. If they can't do it, and if the Liberals can't come up with it on their own, maybe they can ask Ed Clark and his banker buddies on Bay Street to share some of their hack-proof technology to make it work, because they seem to be making all of the other important decisions on government policy.

Thank you, Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It's now 6 o'clock. This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1801.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Hon. / L'hon. Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Ballard, Hon. / L'hon. Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	Minister of Housing / Ministre du Logement Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of International Trade / Ministre du Commerce International
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism / Ministre délégué à l'Action contre le racisme
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement économique et de la Croissance
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Hon. / L'hon. Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister Responsible for Accessibility / Ministre responsable de l'Accessibilité Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development / Ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Formation professionnelle Minister Responsible for Digital Government / Ministre responsable du Gouvernement numérique
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Municipal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires municipales
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Hon. / L'hon. Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McMahon, Hon. / L'hon. Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research, Innovation and Science / Ministre de la Recherche, de l'Innovation et des Sciences

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	Halton	Associate Minister of Education (Early Years and Child Care) / Ministre associée de l'Éducation (Petite enfance et Garde d'enfants)
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Attorney General / Procureur général Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint de parti reconnu
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Hon. / L'hon. Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation
Vacant	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	
Vacant	Ottawa–Vanier	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bob Delaney, Cheri DiNovo
Joe Dickson, Han Dong
Michael Harris, Sophie Kiwala
Arthur Potts, Todd Smith
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Ann Hoggarth
Yvan Baker, Toby Barrett
Han Dong, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Ann Hoggarth
Cristina Martins, Peter Z. Milczyn
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lou Rinaldi
Yvan Baker, Mike Colle
Grant Crack, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Harinder Malhi
Jim McDonnell, Lou Rinaldi
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Présidente: Cristina Martins
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
James J. Bradley, Raymond Sung Joon Cho
Wayne Gates, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Cristina Martins
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Mike Colle
Bob Delaney, Randy Hillier
Michael Mantha, Arthur Potts
Shafiq Qaadri, Laurie Scott
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Steve Clark
Granville Anderson, Robert Bailey
James J. Bradley, Steve Clark
Vic Dhillon, Sophie Kiwala
Michael Mantha, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
John Fraser, Ernie Hardeman
Percy Hatfield, Monte Kwinter
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Peter Z. Milczyn, Julia Munro
Arthur Potts
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Ted McMeekin
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Jennifer K. French
Ted McMeekin, Mario Sergio
Bill Walker, Soo Wong
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Lorne Coe
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Ted McMeekin, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch