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26 septembre 2017

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Président : L'honorable Dave Levac
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ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 26 September 2017

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 26 septembre 2017

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

REPRESENTATION STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LA REPRÉSENTATION ÉLECTORALE

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

Bill 152, An Act to amend the Representation Act, 2015 and certain other Acts / Projet de loi 152, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2015 sur la représentation électorale et d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I wish I could say I'm really glad to take part in this debate. This had the potential, I believe, to be a really progressive act for northern Ontarians, specifically for First Nations. Instead, we're ending up with something that pleases some of the people but doesn't please the people we were trying to serve by creating two Far North ridings where First Nations would be in the majority.

Before I go there, I just want to go through a bit of what has happened in northern Ontario electorally in regard to ridings over the last number of years that I've been a member. When I was first elected in 1990, there were 15 ridings in northern Ontario. That served northern Ontario well enough in the sense there were five additional members than we have now and it allowed for constituencies that were a little bit more manageable as far as size. Because there were an extra five ridings, we were able to divvy up northern Ontario, and it was a little bit more manageable. There were still some very large ridings. Kenora, for example, was a pretty large riding, and so was Cochrane North.

My point is that we had 15 ridings. Along came Mike Harris, through his Common Sense Revolution, and he decided northern Ontario should lose five ridings. So Mr. Harris passed what he called the Fewer Politicians Act, and northern Ontario lost five ridings as a result of the Conservative election. That's something that we've never

really recovered from in northern Ontario, because it means that in the assembly here there are five less northern voices that are able to be on either side of the House to advocate for the issues that are important to northern Ontario.

Like northern Ontario, eastern Ontario, southwestern Ontario or Toronto, we all have our particular challenges. The city of Toronto has challenges around gridlock, around transportation and around development. There are a number of issues that are very unique to the city of Toronto. Rightfully so, there are a number of members here—a large number of them—who are on all sides of the House advocating for what's good for the GTHA.

But in northern Ontario, we find ourselves, because of Mike Harris, with five less members than we had in the pre-Harris days to be able to advocate for the north. So that means less people have chances of being in cabinet, it means less people on committees, and it means less people to lobby for communities across northern Ontario to advocate for those things that are important.

We have unique challenges in northern Ontario. We have the largest geographic area in Ontario, with the smallest population. We have transportation issues that are very different and very unique compared to the rest of Ontario. We have a large geography where we have to service communities that are pretty far apart. In my riding alone, on Saturdays and on Fridays, like all members, I attend riding events. With my good friend Mr. Yakabuski, from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, we get to do radio together every Friday. I know that he, like you, Mr. Speaker, attends riding events, which is what we do as members on weekends. I have to travel an equivalent distance of from Timmins to Toronto to attend in one part of my riding, by the time I drive there and back, in one day. It's a seven-hour drive just to get from where I live, in Kamiskotia Lake, over to Hearst. To get to Constance Lake is even further. It's a seven- to eight-hour drive, depending on where you're going for what event.

There are unique challenges with that. You have to have a highway that has far less traffic than you do on the 401. It means that you've got to maintain that highway. We've managed to reconstruct almost all of Highway 11 over the last little while. There's still one stretch that we're working on north of Kapuskasing, between Kapuskasing and Hearst. But that costs money. Highway construction in northeastern Ontario is the most expensive highway construction in the province—

Mr. John Yakabuski: In the world.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It might even be the world, but I know it's the most expensive in Ontario because of the

geography. You've got to dig down and build the road base, because in a lot of places, they're going through muskeg.

You need to have those northern members, to be able to add voice to those issues that are unique to northern Ontario around everything from infrastructure to education to the economy.

For example, the government announced something that we New Democrats have been pushing for for a long time, and that's the creation of a francophone university.

Laissez-moi vous dire, il y a une question qui a besoin d'être répondue. Si on crée une université francophone ici à Toronto—une bonne idée que nous autres, on appuie; on a poussé pour ça pour des années, ma collègue France Gélinas et moi-même—on a besoin de ne pas oublier qu'il y a déjà une université en place appelée l'Université de Hearst.

L'Université de Hearst a besoin d'avoir de la programmation qui va être égale ou meilleure que ce qu'on a à Toronto pour qu'on ne perde pas nos étudiants au nord de la province qui vont débarquer pour aller au Sud pour avoir une éducation universitaire en français à Toronto. On ne veut pas que cet exercice devienne un autre outil pour enlever les jeunes du Nord, parce qu'une des affaires qui nous aide à garder le monde au Nord présentement, c'est l'Université de Hearst.

My own daughter went to the Université de Hearst and is working in Timmins, because she got a good education in French and she's able to find employment, with the university degree that she got, in the city of Timmins. It's not going to do as much good if we create a university in Toronto and we offer better programming so that we can steal students from northern Ontario, out of Hearst, Kap and Timmins, so that they move down to southern Ontario. C'est pour ça and that's why we need to have strong representation in this Legislature.

I think what Mr. Harris did, when he took five members away from the assembly from northern Ontario in his Fewer Politicians Act—he was the Donald Trump of the day, by the way. He wasn't as Twitter-ful as this particular president is. He certainly would never have gone after the NFL issue; I can guarantee you that. Nonetheless, we are still reeling from that decision.

Last spring, the government introduces legislation on an idea that we in the NDP have been pushing for for a long time—in fact, we had it in one of our platforms a couple of elections ago—and that is that we create a commission in order to create ridings in northern Ontario where First Nations would be in a larger percentage of the overall population, so that they're able to elect their own.

If you think we have challenges in northern Ontario, Mr. Speaker, in places like Timmins, Hearst, Kenora, Thunder Bay and Sudbury, can you imagine the challenges in Pikangikum, Attawapiskat, Peawanuck, Marten Falls and every other community in between? There are some unique challenges that people here, and even myself, as a representative of that part of the riding, can barely fathom. You're talking some poverty, in some

cases, as bad as some Third World conditions. You're talking a lack of infrastructure, where you can't even drink the water, or else you're going to get sick. You're talking about infrastructure where, when you bathe your child, they get diseased on the skin from the stuff that's in the water. You're talking about no pavement on the roads, so that in the summer when you finally get some nice weather, you've got dust flying around the community that's causing all kinds of respiratory problems for people living in those communities. You're talking about no transportation other than air, because there are no roads in any parts of the northwest or northeastern part of northern Ontario where the First Nations are. There's hardly any road network at all. We're still struggling to try to come up with building a road that would connect Highway 11 to the James Bay. The only thing we have are airplanes and a rail system that goes to Moosonee.

0910

So there are unique challenges for the First Nations in the Mushkegowuk territory and in the territory in the northwestern part of the province that are very unique to those people and very unique to that geography. And that's why we were hopeful, when the government introduced this legislation last year, that we were finally going to be moving on trying to create a couple of ridings in the Far North that would have given First Nations the ability to be able to elect their own because they would be in a higher percentage. What I thought was going to come out of this, and I think what a lot of First Nations members thought was going to come out of this, was that we were going to create two ridings in the Far North, north of Highway 11 essentially. You would have had a northwest riding and a northeast riding of the Far North. In those ridings, 90% to 95% of the population in the northeast would be First Nation, and it wouldn't be too far from that in the northwest. That would have allowed the First Nations to more than likely, not guaranteed, but more than likely elect their own. In the current riding configuration of Kenora–Rainy River, the First Nations are a minority and in the current configuration of Timmins–James Bay, the First Nations are a minority, so it's hard for them to elect their own into this particular configuration because they make up a smaller percentage of the riding.

So when the commission finally was struck and they started to do their work, I went to meet with the commission. I was the only one; I was the only member who went as a member to go meet with the commission here in Toronto. I know that Sarah Campbell did the same in the northwest when she met with the commission out there. When I met with the commissioners, I said, "Listen, you've got to be very conscious that politics in the Far North is very different than it is anywhere else in Ontario." It's not party politics. It's not NDP, Liberal, Conservative. Really, there's no such thing in that culture; it's more the politics of the individual and it's family politics. Yes, they will run under banners, I would imagine, and for us in the NDP, I think we will do well. But the point is that it will be individuals who decide to

run under somebody's banner, and it will be more about the individual than it will be about the party. That's not necessarily a bad thing, because culturally that's who the Cree are and that's who the Ojibway are. They operate in a different system and in a different mindset than we do.

So I met with the commission here in Toronto, at the University of Toronto, and my advice to them was that you need to create two ridings in the Far North above Highway 11 where you divide the populations as equally as you can; and that, yes, they would be much smaller ridings population-wise, but they would be large geographic ridings nonetheless, and then they would be in a position to elect their own. Imagine that, Mr. Speaker, that in June of next year, if the House comes back then, or in the fall, depending on when the government decides to call the House back that year, we would end up with, in that configuration, two members from the Far North who are Mushkegowuk Cree or from one of the other communities in the northwest. I think that would be great. It would be the first time in the history of this province that we elect First Nations members directly to this assembly.

That would be a true step toward reconciliation, because we need to understand that the First Nations never gave up their sovereignty in the treaty. When they signed Treaty 9 and Treaty 3, which are the areas that are covered by these particular boundary changes, they signed a treaty with Ontario and with Canada—Ontario was a signatory to Treaty 9—and they said, “We're not giving up our sovereignty. We're going to share the land with you.” Well, we never did the sharing part. We were really good at doing what white colonial governments do, and we went in and told them what was good for them, which wasn't any good for them. We put them on reserves. We didn't provide them the resources they needed to run those reserves with any type of real infrastructure; unemployment rates at 80% and 90%, depending which community you're in; and a host of problems as a result of what we did with residential schools. And we just made all the decisions for them.

So starting some years ago, First Nations said, “Enough is enough,” and they started demanding to manage some of their own programs, everything from child welfare to hospitals—you name it. We're moving in that direction. Some of that has been done; some is still a work in progress. There are difficulties along the way, but to take a step towards self-governance means to say that there's some learning to be done and sometimes there are errors made and you learn from that and you move on.

But imagine, come the spring, if we were to elect two First Nations members from the Far North here in this assembly, it means that we'd have people who understand in a very visceral way what the challenges are to the people in those communities. They would understand, when we have debates about infrastructure and talk about things like subways, streetcars, buses and trains—they'd say, “Oh, my God, you've got those? How about you just give us a one-lane highway made of gravel to get to my community? We'd be pretty happy with that.” You would

have people here who understand the issues of poverty in the context of living on-reserve, because there are very unique issues of poverty that they face on a daily basis as a result of living on-reserve and the lack of support that we've provided them, both federally and provincially, to deal with those issues on-reserve. We'd have advocates here 24 hours a day in this assembly and in our committees who would be able to sensitize the rest of us in understanding some of the challenges that they face and what needs to be done in order to slowly start turning back the damage that we've done to those people and those communities as a result of our colonial ways when it comes to how we've governed issues for them on the James Bay.

I spoke to the commission and I said, “What I would do and what I strongly recommend is that you do create two ridings across the Far North.” The commission came back and said, “Well, there are possibly constitutional issues with that.” And I get it. Somebody in southern Ontario is going to say, “Oh, my God, they're going to get a riding of 15,000 people. Who the hell are they?” Well, they're the Mushkegowuk Cree. They're people who we did treaty with. They're people who never gave up their sovereignty. They're people who are saying, “We still want to share our land with you, but we want to be there making the decisions with our people.”

So, yes, create two small ridings in the Far North. The population would only be about 16,000 or 17,000 per riding. I get it; it's small. But it's been done in other parts of Canada, where we've created ridings that are as much as 75% smaller in population to the average provincial riding in the western part of this country. People have tried to challenge it, but the courts have upheld that if you're creating a riding—typically when you create a riding you have to look at population. The general rule of thumb is that as long as they're all close enough together in population and there's not a large deviance, it's held as being okay. That's legal. Well, there's another principle that was put in place by the Supreme Court that says that you then also can deviate from that because of cultural or linguistic reasons for First Nations. So I think it would be upheld by the courts. But let some person—I was going to use a bad word there—go and challenge us on the creation of two Far North ridings where First Nations people come to this Legislature. Let that person stand up, let that colonialist stand up to the First Nations and be counted in trying to turn the clock back to say, “No, you're not entitled to have members here in this Legislature.” I want to see who those people are.

I don't think it would happen. I think there are more and more people in this province who are understanding because of the work that some of us have been doing and the work that, certainly, the grand chiefs in the communities have been doing—people like Theresa Spence, Stan Louttit, Jonathon Solomon, Alvin Fiddler and a whole bunch of others—to put their issues front and centre. I think there are a lot of gracious Ontarians who would say, “You know what? This is maybe not the entire solution to the First Nation issues, but this is a big step in the right direction.”

By creating two ridings in the Far North, north of Highway 11—northeast, Mushkegowuk; northwest, the other riding—you would be in a position where they would be at about 90% of the population of those ridings, and more than likely, you'll be electing First Nations members to come into this assembly in the next election. That's what I told the commission when I met with them way back—I think it was spring of this year, when they first got together and I met with them in Thunder Bay.

0920

The one thing I do want to say about this government initiative is that it was a rather rushed process. This commission was put on the road in June or the beginning of July, and they had till August to make their recommendations. People didn't even get their heads around this. I went to meetings in Timmins where the commission came and there were less than 10 people there. There was one meeting where I think two people showed up. There were meetings that were attempted up in the Far North that didn't even happen because they couldn't get a hold of people because people were out gathering. You know what? You don't go to the A&P when you live in Peawanuck. You don't go to the Metro store to gather your food in the way that we do. A lot of the food that they eat through the winter is gathered through the summer, the spring and the fall.

So guess what people are doing in the summer? First of all, they're warming up from a really cold winter, because it gets pretty cold in far northern Ontario, but more importantly, they're doing the things they need to do to prepare for the next winter. People are building buildings and doing whatever construction can be done in that short two-month or three-month period that they're able to do construction in, because if you're going to build housing or sewer plants or anything, you've got a very short construction window to do it. People are busy and band offices and administrations are busy managing projects in that three-month window in the summer to do construction. People are doing what they do by gathering in order to harvest food for the winter. So the commission wasn't able to engage with hardly anybody in the Far North because of the circumstance.

If this had been done in the winter and we had given six or seven months for the commission to do its work, I'm very sure that the First Nations members would have participated in large numbers. But they didn't do so because, quite frankly, they were doing the stuff they normally do in the summer. It's not that they were going off on holidays to Disneyland or Marineland or Wonderland; they were gathering food. They were building buildings. They were doing the stuff that they've got to do in preparation for winter.

The commission went out on the road and they consulted who came, and then they finally came out with an interim report. I remember, when I read their interim report, being extremely disappointed, and I said that to the commission directly when I met with them a second time in Timmins. I said, "I wish I could stand here and say, 'Job well done,' but I'm really disappointed with what you came forward with." For Timmins: wonderful.

I'm going to have a riding that's 43,000 people in the next election. I'll literally be able to get on my bicycle and bike from one end of the riding to the other, if I run in Timmins. If I run on Highway 11, it's essentially the old Cochrane North riding, less Cochrane. It's Smooth Rock Falls to Peawanuck, Hearst and everywhere in between—Constance Lake.

This is what really galled me: The logic that the commission used was, "Oh, this creates a francophone riding."

Vous n'avez pas remarqué que je parle français, que je suis un francophone de Timmins—Baie James? Vous n'avez pas réalisé que c'est déjà une majorité francophone? On est la plus grande majorité dans ce comté-là : à Timmins, c'est 40 % de la population, puis sur la 11, c'est 60 % à 70 % de la population. « On a créé un comté francophone. » Voyons donc! Je m'imagine si j'étais un anglophone, que je ne savais pas comment parler français et que mes parents n'étaient pas des Lehoux et des Bisson : « Oh non, on ne connaît rien de la langue française, nous autres, parce qu'on est un comté plein d'anglophones. » Allez-vous-en donc.

That was a real insult. They were trying to say that the reason they were creating this new riding configuration was because we were going to create a francophone riding in northern Ontario. I just finished explaining that I am a francophone. My paternal name is Bisson. My maternal name is Lehoux. That's about as French as you get. We came here in the 1600s, one with "les filles du roi."

To all of a sudden try to say that this is a great thing for francophones: I'm sorry; in the riding I currently represent, 40% of the population in Timmins is French, and I would say that about 65% or 70% of Highway 11 is French. Combined, we are the majority in my riding. The likelihood of electing a francophone in James Bay is pretty strong. You don't need to create a new riding on Highway 11 to create a francophone riding; it is already a francophone riding. Let's put that one to sleep.

The other thing is, as Grand Chief Solomon from the Mushkegowuk Cree said the other day when he first heard about this and we were chatting about it—I ran across him somewhere: "I don't know if I should be honoured or I should be angered at the creation of the Mushkegowuk riding." He said, "They're creating a new riding called Mushkegowuk. First of all, nobody ever asked me. Nobody ever asked any of the Mushkegowuk people if it was okay to use that as a name. We're kind of honoured that they wanted to use our name, but nobody came and talked to us about it. And then I look at the geography and find out I'll be smaller in percentage than I am now. We end up that the James Bay is about 10 polls to the about 65 to 70 polls that you'll have on the Highway 11 corridor."

So they see themselves as being in a minority. They see themselves as not having an elevated chance of electing a First Nations person to the new riding of Mushkegowuk. So they're saying, "What about us? We thought this exercise that the government announced was

about reconciliation”—said Jonathon Solomon, said Pat Chilton, Chief Gull out of Attawapiskat and other people I've talked to.

What really struck me in the majority of the conversations I had: Nobody was surprised. I can't use the words that they used when they talked to me about it—but what they said was, “We are hardly surprised that yet again we're getting the short end of the stick. We're kind of used to it. The government is really good at making announcements that sound good on the surface. The government announced that they're going to create these ridings to help First Nations, and we find out we're worse off in the new configuration than we are in the current configuration. Well, we're not surprised. This is par for the course. This is more colonialism. This is not about reconciliation and respect. This is like, ‘We're going to use your name so that we can call it First Nation, Mushkegowuk, and then we're just going to carry on doing what we did before. And we're creating a francophone riding called Mushkegowuk.’”

Imagine if you're a Mushkegowuk, somewhere on the James Bay territory, in the territory of the Mushkegowuk people, and you hear the words coming from the commission and the government, “We are creating a riding for First Nations called Mushkegowuk where francophones will be in the majority to elect their own.” I don't think they're too happy; in fact, they're not. They're not hostile. They're not angry. They're not yelling and screaming. That's not the way of the Mushkegowuk Cree. They're very respectful people, infinitely patient people.

Pat Chilton was telling me the other day—and he is one of the guys that I like to talk to, because he has been around the horn a number of times on most of these issues. He said, “Gilles, we don't put our hopes up high with you guys too much because we know you can't help yourselves.”

I, for one, am trying to say to this government and to this assembly that we need to change the boundaries. You can't create the boundaries the way that you're doing it now. It's a slap in the face to the First Nations, and it's disrespectful towards reconciliation. We actually have a chance of having two members from the Far North be elected in the next election to be members in this assembly. That would go a long way towards reconciliation. It would go a long way in helping us better understand their issues. Will we?

As I said to the Mushkegowuk Council—they had their AGM on Thursday; that's why I wasn't here on Thursday, last week. I was meeting with the Mushkegowuk up in New Post. Does anybody know where New Post is? See, that's my point. New Post even has a road that—I don't begrudge people, because there are places in southwestern Ontario I wouldn't know. But my point is, it talks to the geography of this province. How are you going to understand the issues of New Post unless you have somebody—in this case, John Vanthof is the member there, and he travels to that area quite a bit. I go there occasionally as well. But if you have somebody

from the James Bay who represents the people of the James Bay, it would be a lot better.

Anyway, I was at the New Post AGM for Mushkegowuk on Thursday, and there was a discussion about this. I've got to tell you, I love working with the Mushkegowuk Cree because you learn so much from our friends on the James Bay, and one of them is an infinite amount of tolerance—an infinite amount of patience and understanding. They understand that we missed the boat. They understand that we couldn't help ourselves. We had to do something that bettered ourselves and didn't help them. They understand that. They don't like it. They're not happy. But they understand it's more of the same; it's more colonialism. So as some of my friends that I was talking to there on Thursday were saying, “We're not surprised. We're not surprised that yet again you couldn't but help yourself rather than help us, and make it look as if you're trying to help us.” A great press release: “Government of Ontario creates two northern ridings in the Far North,” Mushkegowuk being one of them. The average person in Toronto—I don't blame them—opens the paper and says, “Oh, bravo. Wonderful. We're finally doing something for First Nations.” Well, the First Nations who live there are saying, “Well, no. Actually, you're not doing anything. We're going backwards; we're not going forwards.” They were disappointed, but they weren't surprised.

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In the conversation that ensued at the Mushkegowuk tribal council meeting, they said, “Can you think that maybe they would come up and see us? We were out doing things this summer like building housing and gathering food. We were doing the stuff that we traditionally have to do in the summer”—because their summers are so short—“so of course we didn't meet with any commission. We didn't, quite frankly, have the time.” We need to respect that. That's the way that they do business there. It's not for us to impose our culture and our ways on them. It's for us to accommodate them.

They said, “Do you think that maybe this government will send a committee up to meet with us and we can actually have a discussion about what this is all about?” I said, “Well, let me see. Let me go and talk to the government House leader and the Conservative House leader in order to see if we're able to make this happen.” So I had discussions this week with the government House leader. He's agreed to allow the committee to go to Moose Factory on Thursday of next week during constituency week.

There are some challenges because there's not a lot of infrastructure there. Trying to put up 15 people from committee in Moose Factory is pretty hard to do on short notice. You'd need a lot longer. I already called, just so the Clerks know, and there are only five rooms available. It looks like we're going to have to go overnight in Kenora and then fly directly to Moose Factory on the Thursday. And it's got to be on the Thursday because the grand chief and a lot of his people are at another conference and they're not flying back in until the Thursday morning.

Again, are we prepared to respect the First Nations? Is this assembly prepared to say, "Let's move the committee to Thursday?" So far, the answer from the government House leader's office is yes, which is good, but I'm getting some pushback from the Conservatives. The Conservatives say, "Well, the committee has got to go to Timmins." It's been there twice. Timmins is in favour of this bill. I'll tell you right now, I'm voting for it. I'm never going to vote against a bill that creates two northern ridings. No. Under any circumstance, I'm not voting against that. I'm not happy and that's why I'm being critical in this debate, and I'll fight like heck with my First Nations brothers and sisters to be able to make the changes that need to be made. But I can tell you that if the committee goes to Timmins, Mayor Steve Black will show up and say, "This is wonderful." The chamber of commerce will show up and say, "This is wonderful." All the movers and shakers will show up and say, "It's wonderful. We're going to have a riding of 43,000 people; just us, the little city of Timmins. We'll have our own little enclave and we'll do our thing."

Then, Highway 11, Hearst to Smooth Rock Falls—I'm not even going to include Constance Lake in that; that's for debate a little bit later—will have their own little riding, and the First Nations will be about 8% to 10% of the population of that riding. They're going to have their own little riding and they're pretty happy with that as well. So I can guarantee you that if the committee goes to those two areas where the new ridings are being created, Highway 11 or Timmins, people like it. God, I'm going to vote for it. How can you vote against?

Where we need to go is to Moose Factory to speak to the First Nations. This whole bill was supposed to be about creating First Nation ridings, and the Conservatives say to me, "Oh, yes, but we need to go to Timmins," more or less inferring that if we don't go to Timmins, we're not going to go to Moose Factory. Play that card. Play that card, my Conservative friends. You might win a couple of political battles in Timmins—because that's what this is all about, and that's fine. Bring it on. Do everything you can in Timmins. I don't have a problem with that. I've run against all kinds of people in the past, and the people of Timmins can decide for themselves. I have no issue with that. But this should be about our First Nations friends, and our First Nations friends are asking that that committee go to Moose Factory. The New Democrats want that, and we've been pushing for that. Andrea Horwath wants that; she's been pushing for that. The government has heard, the government has agreed, and now I'm getting pushback from the Conservatives.

I'm doing something that you should never do. You should never be doing this kind of debate in the Legislature, talking about positions of parties, but I'm doing it for a reason. If I don't put this out in the public record now, people are going to think, because of the spin being put on, that this is all about Bisson not wanting the committee to go to Timmins. I know the game. I've been here for 27 years. I understand how it works.

I'm doing a bit of a shot across the bow to my Conservative friends. I'm saying, listen, we need to make

sure that we respect our First Nations brothers and sisters. We need to make sure, when Mushkegowuk Council says to us by way of a unanimous motion at their council—I have the resolution here, which I'll read part of later. I wasn't even there when they did the vote on this; I made sure that I was out of the room and I was gone. They said, in unanimity, "It's a question of respect, and we want that commission or the committee to come to Moose Factory. We want you to come to our area of government," because Mushkegowuk, the government of the people of the James Bay, is in Moose Factory. That's the significance here. Sort of the seat of power of Mushkegowuk tribal council is where their head offices are. The grand chief is going to be there on Thursday. I understand that Alvin Fiddler from NAN will be there as well. Other people will be assembled in order to hear what the committee has to say, and for some discussion to happen between us about what the new riding configuration should be.

Then it will be entirely up to the government members to decide if they want to support the changes that are going to be proposed by the First Nations. I hope they do. I hope that, for one time in the path to reconciliation, we actually say, "Yes, we hear you. We hear what you're asking, and we're prepared to do what needs to be done to support that request."

Yes, we understand, and I understand, that there are going to be those out there who are going to say, "Constitutionally having two ridings of 17,000 people? Oh, my God, the end of the world is coming." Well, let them all move to the James Bay. Let them all live in Attawapiskat or Kashechewan for a week and tell me they don't think that they deserve their own representation. How dare anybody try to say that.

We need to, for one time on the path to reconciliation, understand what treaty is all about. Treaty was not about ceding governance. First Nations never ceded governance to the white man. First Nations said, "We want to share. You share with us the bounty of the land"—forestry, mining, hydro whatever it might deliver—"and you share with us a system of education, a system of health care and an economy that we can all participate in."

Well, you know, we haven't been very good at keeping our end of the treaties. We're really good at taking. We took the gold, we took the copper, we took the power from the rivers, we took the trees. We never shared.

Finally, there's a little bit of sharing starting to happen. People like OPG negotiated an agreement with the Cree with regard to the development of the Mattagami River basin. That was something that I'm proud to say we did and started back in 1991, when I was in government. We did a statement of principle, and we also did an order in council that said that whenever this project goes forward, we need to make sure that we include the First Nations in the benefits of what this thing would be. Some 20, 25 years later, when we built and finally redeveloped the Mattagami River basin, the First Nations got a share of the action. They're part owners of the OPG facilities, and rightfully so.

But that's only the beginning. This legislation allows us to elect directly two members from the Far North who are First Nations members, to be here on a daily basis so that they can advocate themselves for the issues that are important to them and make sure that we, the rest of the ridings across Ontario, are better able to understand what their issues are.

Now, I and Charlie Angus, who both represent the Far North in the James Bay, and Sarah Campbell, who represents the northwest, have tried hard. We've worked hard and we have good relationships with people there. But I'm not Cree. Charlie is not Cree. Sarah is not Ojibway-Cree. We understand some of the issues because we're there a lot, but we don't live those issues that they have lived.

I think of the stories that some of my friends have told me over the years—Charlie Kiokie, Gilbert Cheechoo, and the names go on. I'm not going to tell some of the stories here because, quite frankly, some of them are pretty hurtful. But they have experienced things that we could never fathom as a result of what we imposed on them after we signed treaty. I've got to tell you, it's some pretty tough stuff.

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It's pretty amazing how resilient our First Nations friends are, because they still want to share. After all of this, after everything that has happened, they're still standing there saying, "We're going to live up to the treaty. We respect what we signed. We don't like what you guys have done, but we respect the treaty, and we want you to live up to it. We are certainly prepared to do the same." So this is our chance.

I'm hoping a couple of things happen over the next couple of days. I'm hoping that the Conservatives finally understand that it's right and proper for this committee to go to Moose Factory and that we don't start playing games around the city of Timmins as a way of deflecting and of not allowing the First Nations to have their full say on this thing.

The committee is only going to travel two days. Sorry, it's the only time they're travelling. If it's going to go anywhere in the northeast, it has got to go to Moose Factory because that's where the First Nations are. It has got to—

Mr. Steve Clark: Let's do three days.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Good luck on that one. This is what I love about the Conservatives under Patrick Brown: They're like Liberals. The Patrick Brown Conservatives are trying to become the new Liberal Party of Ontario—really. You guys should be worried about plagiarism on the other side of the House—seriously. They're playing a little bit of a game here.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, they're playing a game. Instead of doing what's right and trying to deal with what we have—the government has agreed to two days of hearings and we're going to the James Bay in order to hear what we have to say—the Conservatives are playing this game: "Well, let's do a third day, and let's go to

Timmins." Well, if you're going to Timmins, how come we're not going to Highway 11? And how come we're not going to Fort Frances? And why don't we go to the Far North? We're not going to the Far North and the northwest—

Mr. Steve Clark: Let's go to Fort Frances.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, because you guys are playing a game. This is all about trying to make points for possible political gain in the next election. I'm going to guarantee you: There's going to be an election in the spring; there will be a Conservative candidate—a good one—you guys will run a full campaign, and good luck. The people of Timmins will decide. It's not for us to play games on the backs of First Nations by way of being able to advance your political benefit. I think that's wrong. Listen, I've run against Al Spacek, a great candidate; I think, one of the strong leaders of northern Ontario; Steve Black—I ran against in the last election. You've always had good candidates, and that's good. That's good, fair competition. Let's do that next election; let's not play that game now. Let us do what's right.

We got two days of hearings during a constituency week when we don't normally travel, so two days is quite a lot, to be honest. We don't normally travel during the constituency week. When is the last time we've done that? I don't think it's been done since the minority Parliament. So we've got two days.

The reason we got the two days is because we, the New Democrats, kicked up a fuss with the government that the First Nations needed to be heard. The government, for their own reasons, some of them for whatever—I'll let them explain themselves—said, "Okay. We'll travel for those two days." They originally came to me and said, "We're going to go to Kenora. We're going to go to Timmins." I said, "Listen, Timmins loves this." There's nobody in Timmins who doesn't think that it's a good thing for Timmins to have its own riding—I'll concede that right now. I'm voting for the legislation, by the way. Nobody in Timmins is going to say this is a bad thing. So let me short-circuit the process right now: If you come to Timmins, everybody is going to say it's great, and that's fine; it's not a problem. But it's the First Nations who are the ones being left aside. They are the ones who are waiting for this to happen so that they can finally work towards reconciliation with the colonial governments of Ontario and Canada. They're the ones who are saying, "Finally, maybe something can be done."

This is the request by the Mushkegowuk Cree. Mushkegowuk's 32nd annual council met last week in New Post—as I said, that's where I was last Thursday. I'm not going to read all of the "whereases" in because all the "whereases" essentially say, "This new riding that's being created actually doesn't move us forward; it moves us backwards. We're going to be lesser in the percentage of the population than we are now." What's worse is, at least when Timmins is part of the riding, there's a sizable First Nations population in Timmins, plus all of the head offices for First Nations are in Timmins: Five Nations Energy; Mushkegowuk Council has an office in Tim-

mins; Moose Cree has an office in Timmins; the health centre is in Timmins; Wabun Tribal Council is in Timmins. There's at least a core First Nations presence in the city of Timmins—not so much on Highway 11. Other than Constance Lake, Hearst and a little bit in Kap, there's not a lot compared to Timmins.

So they're saying in their "whereases" that the configuration of the new riding of Mushkegowuk—two things: "You use the name Mushkegowuk without our permission. We're flattered that you use the name, but you should have at least asked us," and, "We're going to be worse off under this riding configuration representation-wise, as far as being able to elect our own, than we are currently."

They go on to say, "Therefore be it resolved that this the 2017 annual assembly of the chiefs and delegates of the Mushkegowuk people urges that the presently proposed new Mushkegowuk electoral riding not proceed, and that before any electoral riding changes are made, real consultations take place in Mushkegowuk territory"—underline "in Mushkegowuk territory;" that means Moose Factory—"and that a riding be considered and implemented which respects the Omushkego in our ancestral homelands, and ensures the likelihood of real Omushkego representation in the Ontario Legislature in the future." So they're saying, "Listen, if you're going to do this, at least come and talk to us."

As I said, I've talked to the government House leader and the government House leader's office. They've agreed for the committee to go there. I've made some initial phone calls, as I was saying to the table a little earlier. It's going to have to be on Thursday because of timing.

Again, it is not for us to decide when it is that First Nations need to talk to us. We need to find out when they're available. Let's respect them for once. Chief Solomon and others are at another conference next week, but they could be there and fly up to Moose Factory, where they live, on Thursday morning. So we would be able to meet with them on Thursday afternoon from about 12 o'clock or 1 o'clock on. We'd have an afternoon session with the Mushkegowuk people.

I'm urging this assembly to support this bill, even though it's flawed now—I understand that it's flawed. I think any time you create two ridings in northern Ontario, it's a step in the right direction. Of course, we'd never vote against that. The people of Timmins are happy, the people on Highway 11 are happy: I get that. People like the idea that they would have their own ridings in the way that they're being proposed. But that's not what this legislation was supposed to be all about. If you read the preamble of the previous bill that was in this House, there were five principles that were set out. The number one principle was that we were going to create ridings in the Far North in order to give the First Nations people voice. That's what this thing was all about. It wasn't about serving ourselves by helping just Timmins and helping just Highway 11. This is certainly helping Timmins and certainly helping Highway 11—I get that—

but we're forsaking our First Nations friends on the James Bay.

Let me just say this here, because it was commented to me this summer: Timmins and the area of Timmins over the last 15, 20 years have come a long ways. I want to assure you of something, Mr. Speaker: Racism is alive and well when it comes to the feeling towards First Nations. Don't ever think it's not. But there have been efforts in the city of Timmins on the part of many people—our chamber of commerce; our labour councils; the elected provincial and federal officials, like myself and Charlie Angus; the city of Timmins, with former mayor Tom Laughren and his council, and Steve Black and his current council; various organizations—to reach out to First Nations and to say, "Okay, we know that we've done wrong in the past. How can we fix it? We can't fix what happened yesterday. Help us focus on what we do tomorrow."

In our area of Timmins, there is a much stronger appreciation for our First Nations friends on the James Bay, so much so—I was actually moved on Canada Day. We had what was called Stars and Thunder, which was a 10-day event where we had the international fireworks come to Timmins to display their fireworks and we had 10 different big-name bands and performers come to perform. People like Keith Urban were there on Canada Day. We had this wonderful show on Canada Day at about 12 o'clock in Hollinger Park, where Stars and Thunder was taking place.

One of the things that is now automatic: Our First Nations friends are part of every celebration that we do. They brought their dancers. They brought their fancy dancers. It was really something to see. I'm still choked up when I think of it. They came onto the stage, the big professional stage that Keith Urban was going to be singing on that night, and they performed a performance for the people who were gathered there.

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There were 20,000 people in Hollinger Park at that point. You've got to remember, Timmins is only 45,000 people. We had 20,000 people in the park. I remember standing on the stage, watching the dance and the fancy dancers do their thing. There were 20,000 people, mostly from our area, standing there, cheering, whooping, hollering and applauding. They were just really excited with what was going on.

And Gary—I forget his last name now; it'll come to me in a minute, but one of the organizers, a First Nations friend of mine, Gary came and said, "You know what? We have come a long ways in Timmins. You would never have seen this 20 years ago." He said, "I was a little boy who grew up around here, and I can tell you, you felt the hate when you walked down the street. Now, it's still there. There are still some people unfortunately who have those views, but they're a much, much smaller percentage of the population." And why? Because people have stuck their necks out.

Steve Black—I'll give him credit—ran against me in the last election as a Conservative. As mayor, one of the

things he tries to do, and I give him great credit for this, is to involve First Nations in everything we do in the city of Timmins. I think that's appropriate. We are the regional centre for the James Bay. Everything that goes up, or most everything that goes up, to the James Bay in service or material comes by way of Timmins or Cochrane—mostly Timmins because we have the large airport there. But it's a change of attitude.

What Gary said to me is, "It's not like that in Thunder Bay." We saw yet again this weekend, unfortunately, another death in the aboriginal community in Thunder Bay—another mysterious death. The only way you change this is by action. The only way you overcome racism and the only way you overcome the bad that is done to our First Nations friends is by taking action.

In our community in Timmins, we still have problems. Don't anybody ever think that racism isn't alive in Timmins. We have people who have those views, but there are less. They're much more quiet about it and there are less of them, because the leadership from the chamber of commerce to the labour council to the city to myself and others have gone a long ways in order to try to work with our First Nations friends on the James Bay and in the city of Timmins in order to do what's right and give them a real say about what happens in our community.

Have we done it all right? No, we've done some things wrong, but we're trying. One step at a time, we're getting there.

But I was telling you the story about Stars and Thunder. I forgot to close that story. The part that was really moving was, when it came to the speeches after the fancy dancers, both the mayor of Timmins, Steve Black, and myself alluded to the wrongs that were done to the First Nations and about how now we're trying to do things right. Essentially, that's what the speeches were about. The approval on the part of those assembled, the 20,000 people—the applause was deafening.

When Mayor Black and myself spoke to trying to do what's right by way of First Nations and about how we need to build real partnerships, the non-First Nations people who were there, the people of the city of Timmins and the area who were there, of that 20,000, it was deafening to hear the applause—no boos, not jeering, nothing like that. People genuinely responded and were trying to say by way of their response to the speeches, "We, too, support doing what's right for First Nations in our area." That, I've got to tell you, was very moving.

So here we are. This bill is going to come up for a vote shortly. I urge everybody to vote for this bill. This is, again, an opportunity to do what's right for First Nations. As I said, we're creating two new northern ridings, so you can't vote against two new northern ridings in any configuration, but we should at least try to do what's right.

As I said, we in the New Democratic Party have asked that the committee go to James Bay. The government has agreed. The government is trying to accommodate that request. I was on the phone with the House leader's

office yesterday and in discussions with some of the staff. There are some logistical problems that we're trying to work out, but it looks like we can work them out by being there Thursday afternoon next week. That means that people are going to have to go from Kenora, jump on the plane on the Thursday morning after doing the hearing in Kenora on Wednesday, and fly directly to Moose Factory.

Again, I caution my Conservative friends who are saying, "Yes, but we can't go there unless we go to Timmins." Timmins is in favour; they're fine. We love this legislation. I tell you right now, that's what you're going to hear. But don't play the game, "Oh, if you don't go to Timmins, then we're not going to support the committee going to Moose Factory." You've got to let that committee go to Moose Factory. It's as simple as that. It's a no-brainer. It's a step towards reconciliation. The Mushkegowuk people, by way of the assembly, have said, "You can't do this without coming to talk to us."

So I'm urging Patrick Brown, the liberal leader of the Conservative Party, to do what's right and to show his true liberal colours and, for once, to try to help somebody in northern Ontario rather than just playing politics. I realize this is something that we would normally not do in the House, but I'm doing it because I've got no other way of being able to make sure that he gets the message.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's what it's all about. Sorry, I've been here 27 years. I get how it plays.

I, again, urge people to do what's right. I ask people to vote for this legislation. I ask people to be respectful of our First Nations friends and allow the committee to go up north. We need to listen to what the First Nations members tell us on this legislation, and then we have to be willing to amend the legislation. I know my friend, the minister of aboriginal affairs, would understand this.

The commission did what they did for their own reasons, and I think we just leave it at that. But this is finally a chance for us to take a real step towards reconciliation. We need to be able to ensure that after the next election we do have two far northern ridings north of Highway 11 that are made up primarily of First Nations members; one in the northwest, one in the northeast. They would be a huge majority. They would be about 90% in each riding, if not more, where they can elect their own to come here. They will come here on both sides of the House. They're free to choose how they run and all that type of stuff. That will be up to them. Once they're here, we're going to have two people who actually lived the experience, who are going to be able to help us understand what some of their issues are, and work with them towards finding some solutions.

Because I know Minister Zimmerman—excuse me, Zimmer. Why was I saying "Zimmerman?" Wow, that was bad. Sorry about that. My apologies. I know that he truly cares. I know that he's trying to do the right thing. But like me, you're not a First Nations person. We were up in Attawapiskat together—not Attawapiskat; it was Kashechewan. We were up in Kashechewan together

when we signed that historic agreement. You and I were pretty moved by the whole thing as we watched it. But you recognized, as I did, as you went and looked at those who were there and you talked to people who were there, that this was a big deal for them, because it finally meant that they weren't going to be told what to do. They would actually have a seat at the table and decide for themselves what to do with their new community; that colonialism is not alive and well; that we need to do things differently.

We need to recognize that when First Nations signed the treaty they didn't give up their governance. They never said, "Oh, we're going to let you make all of our decisions." All the treaty was about was us sharing what they had. We took, and they never got the sharing part. We're trying to fix some of that now by different things that we've done over the years. Some of it is better than it was, but we have a long way to go. What better thing to do than to amend this legislation and to ensure that we have two far northern ridings that would have First Nations people who come here and represent those parts of the world in Ontario here in this assembly?

Imagine being on a committee when we're talking about a poverty issue or a transportation issue or a health issue or an economic issue with the First Nations member who comes from somewhere in the northwest or the northeast. They have a perspective that is very different from you and me. They live in communities where you have 90% unemployment. They live in a community where the rates of suicide are through the roof with youth, let alone adults. They have communities that have unique problems because of the poverty that is in those communities. They have unique problems because of what has happened with the residential school syndrome. These are all things they understand that we can't even pretend to understand.

Is the minister trying to do the right thing? Absolutely. Are Gilles Bisson, Charlie Angus and Sarah Campbell trying to do the right thing when it comes to First Nations? Absolutely. But we're not them. We don't walk a mile in their shoes. So this is our chance to do something that's right.

Again, I hope that we're able to work our way through the three parties in allowing this committee to go to Moose Factory for the afternoon on Thursday to do what has to be done. We don't get into the politics: "Oh, the committee absolutely has to go to Timmins, or else. If it doesn't go to Timmins, we're not going to support it going to Moose Factory." Oh, my God, let's not go there, please.

Ms. Catherine Fife: No games.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No games on this thing: "Oh, all we've got to do is add another day." Well, if you're going to add another day for Timmins, I want it to go to Hearst, because Hearst has its issues. Then, I need it to go to Pikangikum, because they have their issues. Let's travel the thing for the next year and let's not have a new riding for next year.

1000

The commission has already done all of that consultation and the commission has recommended what they

recommended. I disagree; I think it was a bad recommendation. I've already said that to the commission directly. They took exception to it, and I get it; I understand.

They didn't do it because they were trying to be malicious. I think they tried to do the right thing; I know that for sure. But, again, it's because they're not from the James Bay; they're not from the northwest; they didn't live the experience of being raised in those communities. They saw things from the perspective of a white person. That's what the commissioners saw. Mrs. Pelletier sees it from her perspective, and I get it. I see it from my perspective.

That's why I'm prepared to say, as a representative of that riding, who better to represent the James Bay than somebody from the James Bay? Who better understands the issues of those communities than somebody who lives there and somebody who has lived the experience? Who better to advocate for their issues than themselves? They understand the internal politics of their communities in ways that I never would. I understand just the scratching surface of what some of those politics are. They live it; they've been there; they understand it. They understand what the family politics and the community politics and the religious politics are all about, and the politics of the residential schools syndrome and the politics of poverty. They understand all of that in a way that I could never understand. I can try hard, but they're the ones to truly be able to do it.

Again, I urge the assembly to vote for this bill. We certainly will be supporting it. I urge members to make sure that this committee does the right thing; we don't play politics with this. Let's go and do Kenora and do Mushkegowuk Council hearings up in Moose Factory. Let's hear what they have to say and let them try to do a step towards reconciliation. Let's, as a committee, go back in clause-by-clause and make the changes that need to be made to this legislation so that we actually end up with what we wanted in the first place, which was to have two far northern ridings where First Nations would be the driving force and they would be the people to be elected to come to this Legislature and represent us all.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the time in debate.

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

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I listened very carefully to the remarks from the member from Timmins-James Bay. Our government created this commission, an independent commission, to create the two Far North ridings, the two northern ridings. We're definitely in favour of improving representation for people living in Ontario's northernmost communities.

I listened to what the member had to say. The commission that went out there was independent. It was specifically mandated to consider representation of indigenous peoples as one factor in making its recommendations. The commission was at arm's length; it wasn't the government. It was a commission that was sent out there to try to get the two new ridings' boundaries right.

As stated in the preliminary report, the commission viewed this as a particular priority in its work.

I understand that the commission endeavoured to provide as many opportunities as possible for indigenous peoples to share their perspectives during the first round of consultations, which were held in nine First Nation communities.

Members of the commission also attended the spring assemblies of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Grand Council Treaty 3 and the Chiefs of Ontario. The indigenous voice also comprised the majority of the commission itself. Three of the five commissioners, including the chair, were indigenous.

We tried our very best to make sure this was done right. We are the ones who decided to create these two new northern ridings. I think it was a step in the right direction.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I had the opportunity to hear some of the member for Timmins–James Bay’s speech; I was in committee for the first half-hour of the session this morning. I know that he has been away a bit; he hasn’t been here at some of the House leaders’ meetings. But I want to tell him that we’re not playing any games as a party.

Speaker, you know the Leader of the Opposition. He has been committed to travelling to the north, from our perspective, our caucus, the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus, ever since he became the leader. Every summer caucus meeting we’ve had for the last three years, we’ve been to the north. It has been a great experience for members of the Legislature. I’m a rural eastern Ontario member, so I very much enjoyed going up to the north.

I want to compliment the member for all of the outreach that he has done to prepare for this meeting in Moose Factory. Again, I want to say that our party is not playing games. We’re very supportive of going to Moose Factory. At no time did our House leader, Mr. Wilson, ever communicate to the government House leader, Mr. Naqvi, that a trip to that community was not supported by us—on the contrary. We were asked as part of a negotiation. This member knows better, probably, than anybody in the chamber the way the House leaders’ negotiations work. Sometimes they don’t work.

I know our House leader, Mr. Wilson. He’d be more than happy to sit down, now that the three House leaders are here at Queen’s Park, to negotiate some travel and to get this bill moving. From our perspective, having hearings in the north during the break week and coming back after that and passing this bill—that’s very doable for the Ontario PC caucus. So I encourage the member to sit down with the other two House leaders and get the job done. There’s no games.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I want to commend the member from Timmins–James Bay for sharing the history of this

place, the historical decisions that have been made around the north, and also really emphasizing the opportunity that this House has to move reconciliation to reconcili-action. Bill 152, the Representation Statute Law Amendment Act, is that opportunity.

I agree wholeheartedly with his assessment of the committee’s recommendations that they have missed the mark, and I can tell you why. When I was president of the Ontario Public School Boards’ Association—the member from Windsor also served on that as well—we had a First Nations advisory committee. These were trustees who sat on boards across the province. Those First Nations voices at that table informed us. They informed our advocacy for indigenous peoples. They challenged us to learn. They challenged us to acknowledge that there were great inequities in the education funding from the federal government across this country. They challenged us to push the fact that First Nations people do not have housing standards or water-quality standards, which inform their ability to be successful in the education system, which compromises their potential in their own communities. I’m thankful for those voices because they taught me how to be a better advocate for all students.

I think that it is well within the rights of this House and this Legislature to ensure that we do elect two indigenous voices to this place to rightfully take their seats in this House and bring a marginalized group of voices to this Legislature. We can right this wrong. We can honour reconciliation. If this government chooses not to, that is, indeed, a lost opportunity.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: I can recall, in the last decade, where the government of the day chose to make the provincial boundaries align with the federal boundaries. At that time—it was shortly before I was first elected—I thought to myself, “I’m not sure whether this is a good idea or a bad idea.” But I know our party leader then—then in opposition, later in government—Mr. McGuinty, said, “We’re willing to accept that to a point, but one of the points on which we differ is on northern representation.” And at that time, Mr. McGuinty said—and convinced the party, not merely the members but the broader party—“We’ve got to do a more thorough job in the north.”

The very eloquent and rather lengthy but certainly comprehensive statement by my colleague from Timmins–James Bay certainly filled in some of those gaps that I thought of, and I thought it was a very thoughtful presentation. It’s something to consider along with the issues that came out of the Far North Electoral Boundaries Commission, which is an independent commission. It wasn’t there to be controlled by the government or to take direction from the government. It was there to table recommendations to the government. It was intended to be fair and impartial. It was intended to focus on local needs. I have to say, I didn’t take part in that commission, so I can only read the outcome. Certainly, when my

colleagues from the Far North speak on it, I'm very, very interested in it. As a province, as a society, it's our job to make, going forward, a more thorough and inclusive process than we had in the past.

I want to thank the member for his comments, which I found to be very instructive.

I look forward to this process as it moves forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Timmins–James Bay for final comments.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the unfortunate truth is that we used to have 15 ridings in northern Ontario, then along came Michael Harris, who took five seats away from the north. We've been reeling from that decision ever since. It means five less members here in the assembly, five less members on committee, five less members capable of going to cabinet in order to advocate for northern Ontario. We're still feeling the effects of what five lost northern ridings were to northern Ontario, thanks to Mike Harris and the Conservatives.

This legislation creates two new ridings in northern Ontario. We have to vote for that. You can never vote against two new ridings in northern Ontario, no matter what the configuration is, as I say.

Do the people of Timmins like the proposal? Do the people of Hearst and Kapuskasing like the proposal? Of course they do. You're going to be creating a riding of 43,000 people in Timmins, and you're going to be creating a riding—uniquely Highway 11, Hearst down to Smooth Rock Falls. Of course they like it. If you send the committee there, people will say they like it; there's no question.

But we have to remember what this legislation was supposed to be. It was supposed to be about creating two Far North ridings north of Highway 11 so that the First Nations people are able to elect their own into the Legislature, so that they'd be a majority within their own ridings, thus enhancing the chances of being able to elect First Nations members to this assembly. If we're really serious about reconciliation, this is an action that we can take in this Legislature to make sure that we elect in the next election—by making changes in committee when this thing finally goes to clause-by-clause, to making the boundaries conducive with electing two northern members from the Far North who are First Nations to this Legislature.

So I urge people to put whatever pressure they can on all members of this assembly to make sure we don't play politics with this, that we don't start saying the commission has to go to Timmins or wherever. We know the people of Timmins like this. The people who need to be heard are the Mushkegowuk people. Let's go to their territory and hear from them.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It is now almost 10:15. This House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1012 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): At this time, I would like to do some introductions. Here for a tribute that is being paid, in the Speaker's gallery, is the former Premier of the province of Ontario, Mr. Michael Harris. Welcome, Premier.

Mr. Norm Sterling is here as well.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's the oddest thing I've ever heard: heckling during an introduction.

In the members' gallery, the member for Kitchener Centre in the 38th, 39th and 40th Parliaments, John Milloy, is also with us.

Now it's time for introductions from the members.

Mr. Lorne Coe: It's my pleasure to introduce to the Legislature Deborah MacLatchy, the president and vice-chancellor of Wilfrid Laurier University, and some of the students from Laurier as well. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Paul Miller: The family got some good news last night. My niece Lindsay Lockwood has been named Queen of the Calgary Stampede for 2018. Lindsay will be doing her year as Queen, and then she's going to medical school.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to welcome representatives of the Ontario Pharmacists Association to the Legislature today. I'd also like to specifically recognize Deb Salmarche, OPA board member and a constituent of mine in St. Paul's.

I urge all of you to visit the evening reception in the Legislative dining room to discuss matters of importance to pharmacists in Ontario.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to introduce, from my riding, Ms. Connie Beck, program coordinator at Lambton College for the pharmacy technician program. She's here at Queen's Park today with the Ontario Pharmacists Association.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's my delight to introduce Mr. Brandon Tenebaum, a constituent of mine. He's here's with the Ontario Pharmacists Association. Welcome.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Please help me in wishing a very happy birthday to my parliamentary assistant, the member from Barrie. Her birthday is today.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to introduce Mike Cavanagh from Kawartha Lakes Pharmasave. I'm proud to say that he's the chair of the Ontario Pharmacists Association. I welcome him here today.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have visitors from all the way up north: Carlo Berardi, who is a pharmacist in my riding; as well as Tanner Warren, who is from Sudbury but studying pharmacy in Toronto. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Speaker, you introduced former MPP John Milloy from Kitchener Centre, and I'm glad to see him here. I'm going to introduce some of his students who are here with him today: Sharon, Michelle, Brittany, Kristen, Ravneet, Anthony, Chris, Mitchell, Jacob, Zaher, Isaac, Lisa, Naime, So, Selena, Amanda, Aidan, Aqsa, Michael, Johannes, Jesse, Christopher and Thomas—sorry about the first names, but I want to get through this

quickly—and Professor Patricia Goff, and also Maria Papadopoulos, who is the director of government relations at WLU. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ross Romano: I would also like to welcome to Queen's Park one of my constituents from Sault Ste. Marie, Mr. Allan Braid. If we could all welcome Mr. Braid, please. He is here with his colleagues from the Ontario Pharmacists Association, which I'd also like to extend my welcome to. In fact, Mr. Braid's son and my son went to school together last year, so I just want to welcome him.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I hope all members of the Legislature take the opportunity to drop into Wilfrid Laurier's reception this evening, 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in room 230. You will not be disappointed.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I am pleased to introduce two folks who live on Hargood Place in Streetsville: Lou Grindatio and his grandson, Luke, who are making their first visit to a question period. Please welcome them.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce a constituent of mine who is here today with the Ontario Pharmacists Association, Ms. Jennifer Baker.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'd like to introduce and welcome Mr. Tim Brady, who is a member of the board of the Ontario Pharmacists Association. Welcome here to Queen's Park and to question period.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I'd like to introduce Helene and Jesse Arruda, the parents of page captain Michael Arruda, who are here with us this morning.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce two members of Ontario Racing who are here today: Hugh Mitchell and Mike Chopowick. They're having a reception in room 228 at 11:30.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to introduce my good friend Sean Simpson. He's here as a pharmacist, but also he just opened up his new store in Niagara Falls last week. Welcome to Queen's Park.

I'd also like to introduce Tom Valiquette, who is the chief operating officer and chief financial officer of Fort Erie live racing. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Jeff Leal: In the east members' east gallery, I'd like to welcome members of Ontario Racing who are in the House today: Hugh Mitchell, who is the chair; Ryan Dupuis, who is the senior director for finance; Mike Chopowick, who is the acting executive director for Ontario Racing; and Gavin Van Elsberg, who is a staff member with Ontario Racing.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I think most of the pharmacists have been introduced, but I'd like to introduce the pharmacists in the Legislature, I know they have some great proposals for this government to act on. I just to want say hi to Sean Simpson, the past president of OPA, who did a wonderful job—best of luck to Mike in the upcoming year—and, of course, to my classmate Brandon Tenebaum, who has all the nice stories about me if you want to talk to him.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I had a great meeting this morning with the pharmacists from the Ontario Pharmacists Association, but specifically I'd like to introduce

Mr. Sherif Guorgui, who is from the great riding of Oakville.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'd like to introduce in the west gallery, rather than the east gallery, Bob Broadstock, president of Quarter Racing Owners of Ontario, and Emilio Trotta, the CEO of Ajax Downs. They're here with many other horse people today in reference to the Ontario Racing reception between 11 and 1 o'clock, in rooms 228 and 230.

Mr. Han Dong: I would like to introduce Hitesh Pandya to the House. Mr. Pandya is a board member of the Ontario Pharmacists Association and a constituent of mine in the great riding of Trinity-Spadina. Welcome, Mr. Pandya.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'd like welcome to Queen's Park in the east gallery Peter Werhun. He's a first-year student at Osgoode Hall Law School, and I wouldn't be surprised if he's sitting here in this chamber one day. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Arthur Potts: From the equally great riding of Beaches-East York: Eric Morrison, pharmacist. Welcome.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a number of guests to introduce here this morning. This week, Casa Das Beiras Cultural Community Centre is hosting their cultural week in my riding of Davenport. Joining me here today at Queen's Park is president Bernardino Nascimento and guests from Portugal, from the brotherhood of Beira Grão Vasco de Viseu—Confraria Saberes e Sabores da Beira Grão Vasco de Viseu—are Jose Ernesto, Antonio Meneses and Mario Antunes.

Also accompanying the group here today is a large contingent of young students from the University of Coimbra, the oldest university, perhaps, in the world, established in 1290. Part of the contingent here today is the Estudantina Universitária de Coimbra: David Pinto, Daniel Monteiro, Rui Cruz, Diogo Mendes, Pedro Ventura, Bruce Carrulo, Miguel Luis, Gonçalo Oliveira, Francisco Cruz, Carlos Pinho, Mauro Silva, Pedro Nolasco, Michael Esteves, Bruno Sacramento, Tiago Rocha, Emanuel Nogueira and Nuno Lopes. Welcome to Queen's Park. Bem-vindos, and enjoy your day.

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Mr. Arthur Potts: I also think we should recognize Gord Martineau, who's in the Speaker's gallery. Gord Martineau and I are fellow panellists on 1010 radio.

Hon. David Zimmer: A constituent of mine is here in the assembly: Louis Wei, who is the Ontario Pharmacists Association student representative.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Today our page captain, Gregory Bannister, is visited by his parents, Patricia and Marc Bannister, from the lovely riding of Brant; brother Alexander Bannister; grandmother Carol Gamble; uncle Mike Bannister; and family friend Stephanie Villano. Please welcome them to Queen's Park. Thank you for being here.

Also, would the members please join me in welcoming the family of the late Edward Michael Havrot, MPP from Timiskaming during the 29th, 31st and 32nd

Parliaments, who are seated in the Speaker's gallery: daughter Cathy, daughter Sharon Martineau and her husband Gord.

Again, our visitors, former members who are here: Welcome to Queen's Park and thank you for being here.

EDWARD HAVROT

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will now turn to the government House leader for 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 Timiskaming, Mr. Edward Havrot, 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 pay tribute to the former MPP from Timiskaming for up to five minutes. Do we agree? Agreed.

Our first contributor: the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House and represent the good people of Timiskaming–Cochrane, and especially so today, to pay tribute to a former member for the riding of Timiskaming, Mr. Ed Havrot.

Ed Havrot was born on January 4, 1927, and passed away on April 16, 2017, in his 90th year. He leaves behind his wife of 65 years, Gayle; daughters Joanne Phillips and her husband Lloyd, Catherine, Barbara Havrot and her partner David Erickson, and Sharon Martineau and her husband Gordon; and 11 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. Welcome to those family members who attended today.

Mr. Havrot's family emigrated from Poland in 1930, when he was three. The family arrived in Kirkland Lake, where his father went to work in the mines. Ed started his career in the forestry sector. He then purchased Northern Canada Bakery. Many people have fond memories of Ed in his bakery days, especially the deliveries, and staying open for extra orders. He then owned and operated the Teck Hotel—another people-oriented business.

Throughout his adult life, Ed was heavily involved with volunteer organizations in Kirkland Lake. He was an honorary life member of the Doric Lodge. He was also deeply committed to his local United Church. Ed especially enjoyed spending time at the family cottage on Sesequinika Lake.

Mr. Havrot's interest in the welfare of his neighbours and customers was likely one of the reasons that he entered the political arena. He was a councillor, and later reeve, of the township of Kirkland Lake. He ran for the provincial seat of Timiskaming in 1971 under the Progressive Conservative banner. He was successful and sat in the 29th Parliament. He was defeated in 1975, but was re-elected in the 31st and 32nd Parliaments. He ended his provincial political career as Minister of Transportation and Communications.

Ed Havrot was a product of his time and his surroundings. Immigrants came from all over the world

to work in the mines and mills of the north. They were more focused on improving the living conditions of their families than on being politically correct. Ed Havrot reflected this fact. MPP Havrot was a maverick who shot from the hip. This characteristic, coupled with an incredible sense of humour, can cause problems in the political arena. As I was going over some of the news articles, it occurred to me that he must have been a communications nightmare for the governing Tories. I am sure his remarks were always awaited with bated breath, with political damage control measures ready to be implemented, and sometimes those measures were taken.

Locally, his off-the-cuff style endeared him to his supporters. He was not a fence-sitter. His constituents did not have to guess what he was thinking about on any given issue, and there was always that wicked sense of humour. The same qualities that caused so much concern in Queen's Park were his biggest attributes at home.

In his era, local elections were hard-fought affairs, mostly between the PCs and the NDP. Provincial interest in Timiskaming politics was at an all-time high. As far as I know, the only time that the Queen's Park press gallery attended a nomination meeting in Timiskaming was for the PCs in 1975. The successful candidate? Ed Havrot. Although he ultimately lost that election, he came back to win the next two.

Ed Havrot had an enormous impact on politics in Timiskaming. He remained active and interested for many years, and though I often disagreed with him, I respected the fact that you always knew where he was coming from.

In closing, I would like to thank the Havrot family for sharing Ed with the province. Political life is difficult, and no member can serve without the full support of their loved ones. If the measure of a life in public service is to bring the issues faced by your constituents to the attention of the province and to force debate on those issues, however uncomfortable that may be, Ed Havrot's tenure as a member of provincial Parliament was not spent in vain. Thank you.

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

Mr. James J. Bradley: I'm delighted to have the opportunity to pay tribute to Ed Havrot on this occasion, particularly in view of the fact that some of his colleagues from years gone by and certainly the family are here. We do welcome to the Legislature Norm Sterling, a long-serving member of the Legislature, elected when I was, on June 9, 1977; and of course Mike Harris, who represented the Nipissing riding; and John Milloy more recently.

All of us look back. I had the opportunity to serve during the period of time that Ed Havrot was in the House and recognized him when I saw one of the headlines that referred to him as "Renegade." You would be interested to hear that it says, "Last night, Havrot, who looks like a middle-aged Fonzie, said he won because people in his riding want something done about the 15% rate of unemployment." He did look like Fonzie, and some of us who remember him remember he always had

the toothpick in his mouth as well, and a smile on his face. He had the Premier of the day on pins and needles at all times as to what Ed might say.

He was the member for Timiskaming. It's a constituency that is larger than most of the southern constituencies, one that has some very special challenges. Certainly you could say that he was the consummate constituency representative, a representative well of his constituency in particular and the north in general.

Those who are elected in southern ridings, particularly those who are in urban southern ridings, rely upon members of the Legislature from northern Ontario to tell us about the special circumstances and problems confronting their communities and residents, and the potential solutions to those problems. Certainly, Ed Havrot was always prepared to do just that, whether we asked him to or not. That was again something that was a mark of Ed Havrot: He was prepared to share those views on all occasions.

He brought to the deliberations of the Legislature an interesting background—a business background as managing director of two lumber companies, owner of a bakery and hotel, and he was able to view many of the problems through the lens of an individual who had to meet a payroll, first of all, and deal with the challenges that confront businesses, especially under the special circumstances facing northerners in our province. Those who serve the north know there are special circumstances. The former Premier of Ontario, Mike Harris, being from the north, recognized that.

1050

Now many who have served in the Legislature began their careers in municipal politics at that level, and it's the one that I think we concede is closest to the people. Ed Havrot served as both a councillor and a reeve of the town of Kirkland Lake. During that period of time, he was able to hear really on a first-hand basis, not through any filter, the concerns of his constituents. He was also able to identify the role that the provincial government could play in assisting his municipality in the heart of northern Ontario.

Timiskaming has never been an easy riding to win, but in 1971, 1977 and 1981, Ed Havrot was able to put his riding clearly in the PC column.

There's an interesting editorial that appeared in the North Bay Nugget, that well-known newspaper in northern Ontario. It was dated March 20, 1981. That was the day after the Progressive Conservative Party had gone from minority status to majority status. I remember being reminded in opposition—because, as you know, when you're in minority status, you have more influence—by the government of the day about what we referred to as the realities of March 19. The Premier of the day, Bill Davis, did use that terminology once in a while.

I'd like to share, shall I say, selectively from the editorial on that occasion. It really captures a lot about Ed and why he was endeared to the people of his riding. It reads as follows:

“Tough, rough, abrasive, the perennial bad boy of the Progressive Conservative Party. Ed Havrot has been called all these things (and a lot worse by the Toronto news media) but he won again in Temiskaming....

“Mr. Havrot's victory will not be understood by the Toronto news media, which at its most charitable has condemned him for perpetual foot-in-mouth disease....

“But Mr. Havrot, once a baker, once an accountant, once a hotel keeper, knows the character of the people he represents....

“But, give him his due. He has worked hard for his riding and his rough and tumble style seems to suit Temiskaming.

“It must also be said that Mr. Havrot's victory is another example of the political pragmatism that has long distinguished his riding” of Timiskaming.

He points out further in the editorial: “Prominent federal Liberals flocked to Mr. Havrot's banner, while municipal politicians vied to endorse him. In an area that is short of jobs and opportunities, there is not much sympathy for niceties of philosophy or style. Getting the goodies from Queen's Park is the name of the game, and Mr. Havrot plays it well....

“A diplomat he isn't. But the Davis government needs new blood, and the Ontario civil service needs much stronger political direction. Premier Davis might do a lot worse if he selected Mr. Havrot to run some government ministry that desperately needs shaking up and new leadership.

“By winning again, Mr. Havrot has proven that he deserves a second chance.”

I thought that editorial captured—and I didn't read the whole editorial because of time constraints and other reasons. It captures really what Ed was about.

Indeed, Mr. Davis did choose him for a number of portfolios that my friend from the Conservative Party will mention just shortly, so we're not repetitious, but he was chosen for and served on a number of committees here in the Legislative Assembly.

As the previous member for Timiskaming said, we thank the family of Ed Havrot for sharing him with us. It's a real challenge for families to do so, to have members away, to have members attending to so many specific responsibilities. I think those in the north know it's particularly challenging in the north when you're some distance away, the riding is large and the distance from Queen's Park to the northern riding is substantial.

Ontario is a large and diverse province. Each of us, as elected members, endeavours to represent our constituents. Ed Havrot, for the most part, reflected the views of a significant number of residents in Timiskaming during the time he served. For that, he was rewarded with re-election to this House.

Each one of us pays tribute to members who have served in the past. We, as members, know the responsibilities that are onerous on members and we know how important it is, yes, what we do in this House, yes, what we do for the province as a whole, but Ed Havrot understood that first and foremost, you're responsible to the people of your constituency; and he served them well.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: I rise today as well to honour a former member of our legislative family at Queen's Park, Mr. Edward Michael Havrot, who passed away earlier this spring in his 90th year, on April 16, 2017. At his side was his dedicated and loving wife of 65 years, Gayle. Ed is survived by his brother and sister, Ted and Anne; his beloved daughters Joanne, Catherine, Barbara and Sharon; 11 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; and many nieces and nephews.

Mr. Havrot—Edward to everyone, or Ed—was born in Poland, but came to Canada with his family as a child in 1930. His father found work as a hard rock miner and the family settled in Kirkland Lake, the town that Ed would call home for the rest of his life.

After graduating from high school, Edward found work in the local lumber industry. Eventually he branched out on his own and purchasing the Northern Canada Bakery in Kirkland Lake. At this bakery, like all small business owners, Edward took part in completing many different tasks, including delivering bread to corner stores and homes. He enjoyed this immensely as it gave him the opportunity to talk with customers, neighbours and friends, and to learn what was going on in their lives.

Edward came to be known for being hard-working, straightforward and plain-spoken, something the people of Kirkland Lake respected. Friends and colleagues remember him for his great sense of humour, his quick wit and generosity. He always was known for being ready with a good story to tell.

I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Havrot a number of years ago in the presence of another legend, Mr. Lorne Henderson. I was at some event and Mr. Henderson was there. He introduced me to Ed. I never thought I would be here today doing this tribute. Maybe it was ironic, I guess, that we met at that time and now I'm here today.

In 1966, Edward Havrot ran for Kirkland Lake council and served two years as a councillor and one year as a reeve before jumping into provincial politics. In 1971, Ed was elected as the member of provincial Parliament for the riding of Timiskaming as a member of the Progressive Conservative Party that year. He served for three terms, from October 1971 to September 1975, and upon re-election in June 1977 until 1985.

His colleagues in the Progressive Conservative caucus and in the Davis cabinet would often consult with Ed on northern issues like mining, tourism and the forestry industry. Edward was always ready and willing to share "the straight goods," as he liked to say. At Queen's Park, MPP Havrot sat on various standing committees and briefly served as the Minister of Transportation and Communications between February 1985 and May 1985.

Prior to becoming the minister, he had been parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation and Communications from March 1975 to November 1975. During his time as the parliamentary assistant, Mr. Havrot was outspoken regarding the safety of logging trucks, and used his position to push for increased enforcement of the provincial safety requirements, again sticking up, as Mr. Bradley said, for his constituents.

He also briefly served as chairman of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission, or the ONTC, a rarity for a sitting MPP. During his time as chairman, Ontario Northland was viewed as an incredibly important asset for the government, a \$40-million-per-year train, truck, bus and ferry telecommunications network vital to those people of Ed's riding in northern Ontario.

Like all of us in this province, myself included, Mr. Havrot was far from perfect. However, his frankness and fierce advocacy for the north and his constituents endeared him to many in his riding and in this Legislature.

For many years after leaving Queen's Park, Ed Havrot held the distinction of being the longest-serving member of provincial Parliament for Timiskaming, with 12 years of elected service. He is remembered by those who knew him and loved him as an authentic, true-blue northern gentleman. That is how he should be remembered.

As a member of the Ontario PC caucus, I want extend my sincerest condolences to the family and friends of Mr. Havrot.

1100

I did want to add to the record, being as he's here with us today, some condolences that were sent to the funeral home at the time of Mr. Havrot's death. This is from Norman Sterling, MPP, 1977 to 2011:

"To the Havrot family and friends: I served with Ed in the Legislature from 1977 to 1985. I found Ed to be a hard-working, informed and plain-spoken MPP. He was very knowledgeable of the mining, tourist and forestry industries of northern Ontario. After I was appointed to the Davis cabinet in 1981, I would often consult with him on northern issues to get the straight goods (as he would put it). Ed was in constant communication with all of his constituents regardless of their status and standing in the community. I particularly enjoyed having lunch with him in the legislative dining room as he would always have a good story to tell. I enjoyed his friendship and will always remember our times together."

To the family members who are here today, we thank you again for the contributions to Kirkland Lake, Timiskaming and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that Edward made over his lifetime. We thank you again for the support that you gave to him in the role he played in service to the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As always, I would like to thank all of the members for their very warm and heartfelt comments about Ed.

I thank the family for being here, and I know for those who are not, they're here in spirit. I would also like to remind you that we will make available for you a copy of the Hansard and a DVD for the family to share of these wonderful tributes.

Finally, again, thank you for the gift of Ed. We appreciated it very much.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Humidex levels have been approaching the

40s this week. This hits home for me. My mother and my aunt have been lifelong educators in the city of Toronto.

Our schools don't have the infrastructure or air conditioning. Students are saying it's so hot in classrooms, they're having trouble breathing. This is unacceptable in Ontario.

Interjections.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, rather than heckling, will the Premier commit here today that we'll have a mandate for maximum temperatures for Ontario schools in the event of extreme heat?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Education is going to want to comment on the specifics.

I know that when a classroom is hot, it is uncomfortable for teachers and for students, Mr. Speaker. I recognize that, and it has been very, very hot. We understand that there have been concerns raised by students and parents and teachers.

We have worked to provide additional funds to schools because we recognize that the majority of schools in this province were built years ago, when we actually didn't have on a regular basis the kinds of peak hot periods that we have now. We certainly didn't have them in September. So that's why there has been more money—\$1.4 billion, actually—put into school boards so that they could make retrofits and they could provide supports to schools that were built in another day. That's exactly why we've put those funds in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: It's another sweltering day in September. Yesterday, temperatures hit as high as 31, and with the humidex it made it feel in the 40s. Heat warnings have swept the area, yet classrooms don't have air conditioning. We have classrooms that don't have windows that can even open.

Sam Hammond from the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario had this to say: "Students and teachers in many classrooms are subject to unbearable conditions with temperatures over 30 degrees. That takes an unacceptable toll on teaching and learning."

How has the Premier allowed this to happen? They've been in government for 14 years, and here we are with schools without air conditioning and with windows that can't open.

I don't want political spin. Will it be dealt with? Are kids going to continue to have to learn at temperatures that are unbearable?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I am as concerned as the Leader of the Opposition about the well-being of students in our schools and the well-being of teachers.

I know that one of the schools where the Leader of the Opposition's mother was the principal was in my riding. It is a school that has had a huge new addition that has been built onto it in the time that we've been in government. That's St. Bonaventure school in Don Valley West.

We have put billions of dollars into the hands of school boards. They have the knowledge of their schools; they need to have the flexibility to make the changes that

are necessary. I understand that it is very hot right now, but I do believe that at the local level, schools need to have the flexibility to make decisions.

I have utmost faith in teachers and in principals. If there's a situation that is dangerous for kids, they're going to move those kids into the gym; they're going to put fans in place; they're going to do what's necessary for those kids. I have great faith in our educators.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: The Premier quotes these great renovations, and the Liberal caucus claps.

Here are the stats: There are 584 schools in the Toronto District School Board, and only 125 of those schools have air conditioning. That's 584 schools, and 125 with air conditioning. Others have partial air conditioning or none at all.

Krista Wylie, from the parent group Fix Our Schools, said that if the Premier, "who I bet is sitting in an air-conditioned office right now, prioritizes our children as the future, then her government will prioritize our kids and start to look at our schools as the important infrastructure they really are."

In the meantime, how can the Premier expect students to learn while they're sitting in unbearable classrooms?

Mr. Speaker, again, rather than attacking others, rather than saying everything is fine, I ask the Premier: Will she mandate maximum temperatures for Ontario schools in the event of extreme heat? Yes or no?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I had to move a meeting yesterday from my office to another room because, actually, I don't have air conditioning in all of the rooms in my office, nor, as it happens, do I have air conditioning in my house—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Interjection.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Agriculture, come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I recognize that it is very hot in schools that were built in a time when there weren't the kinds of heat events that we have now, when there wasn't the peak heat that we have now. That is exactly why we have put billions of dollars in the hands of school boards: to make changes, to make sure that they do the retrofits which are happening across the province.

I'm not in any way saying that that work is completely done. But, again, I have a lot of faith in the educators in our schools to make sure that children and teachers are kept safe.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Northern Ontario is an absolute gem. While I'm dis-

appointed that the Liberal member from Northumberland–Quinte West has neglected to apologize for his hurtful comments referring to northern Ontario as “no man’s land,” it’s time we turned this negative story into a positive.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, I’ve been to northern Ontario 27 times since being elected leader of the Ontario PCs. The north has so much to offer. From beautiful landscapes to a dynamic population, the north truly has limitless potential in fields ranging from tourism to resource development.

I always see the greatness of northern Ontario, and I understand just how important it is for Ontario for the north to prosper, because when the north prospers, Ontario prospers.

Will the Premier and the member from Northumberland–Quinte West give me the pleasure of joining me on one of my northern tours this fall?

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And this is precisely why we have a problem. I would remind us all, let’s raise ourselves.

Premier?

1110

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think we all recognize that the member for Northumberland–Quinte West is one of the best-respected members in this House. He is a fine man. He has travelled this province. He has been in every corner of this province. He has worked hard, particularly to represent—even when he wasn’t a member. In the interim period when he wasn’t a member, he was travelling this province, gathering information from rural and northern communities to inform the policies that we have put in place.

Then, unlike the members opposite, he actually voted to increase the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund to an unprecedented \$100 million a year. He voted to invest \$1 billion in the Ring of Fire. He voted to increase the northern highways program by \$90 million, bringing it to \$648 million annually. He voted to give Ontarians in rural and northern communities up to 50% off their electricity bills—

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

Supplementary? The member from Sault Ste. Marie.

Mr. Ross Romano: To the Premier: My home of Sault Ste. Marie has—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation will come to order.

Another plea: Let’s ensure that we elevate ourselves instead of spiralling down.

Please.

Mr. Ross Romano: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My home of Sault Ste. Marie has overcome its fair share of challenges. We are a city filled with breathtaking tourist attractions that embody our natural beauty made

famous by the Group of Seven. We are a city that produced incredible people who have had a significant impact on our Canadian culture and our identity: people such as Roberta Bondar, the first woman ever to fly in space; Canada’s Governor General David Johnston; NHL hall of famers, Ron Francis, and Tony and Phil Esposito; gold medallists Brad Jacobs, and Ryan and E.J. Harnden; and Paralympic gold medallist Mac Marcoux. Even Sir William Howard Hearst, the seventh Premier of Ontario, began his career in Sault Ste. Marie. Wayne Gretzky’s number 99 was born in Sault Ste. Marie. I could go on.

So, Premier, please, would you permit the member from Northumberland–Quinte West to join me to celebrate our natural beauty and our rich history in Sault Ste. Marie and see what a great contribution we provide to Ontario?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Bill Mauro: Thank you for the question. I guess some congratulations are in order. First, perhaps to the leader of the official opposition, who actually almost made it through that question without smiling. He just about got there. I don’t think he quite made it.

Also, congratulations to the member from North Bay, who I think is doing his best to create a headline, try and grab a headline. I understand you’ve actually been successful in getting a headline or two on this issue, so I absolutely congratulate you—

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

Hon. Bill Mauro: —for this ridiculous narrative. Anybody who’s been paying attention to what’s going on here since 2003 understands very completely the distinction and the difference that has come from this party since we’ve been in government relative to what happened between 1995 and 2003. Nobody else is buying your nonsense. That’s all I have to say.

Perhaps, if I could, a little bit of advice for the member from Sault Ste. Marie. Just because they ask you to ask questions like this, you don’t have to do it. You don’t have to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Time’s up. Be seated, please.

Final supplementary? The member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. Back to the Premier: The north is home to a vibrant aerospace and tech industry, health and education sector, and a marriage of tourism and resource development. I’m personally inviting the member from Northumberland–Quinte West to visit us. Join me as we paddle the historic La Vase River together. We’ll start in Trout Lake and paddle by folks who are catching their dinner. Then we’re going to have to portage a fair bit, Lou. We’ll pass Fabrene industries, one of the region’s largest manufacturers and global exporters. We’ll pull in at Billy Bob’s Bait for one of the best burgers you’ll ever—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Look, I've been calmly trying to seek everyone's co-operation with this line. If this continues, I'm going to take a break and ask that cooler heads prevail. I have to tell you, it is disappointing that I have to ask this.

Carry on, please.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: As I said, we'll pull in at Billy Bob's for one of the best burgers you'll ever have. We'll end up at Lake Nipissing in the same spot discovered by the First Nations a thousand years ago and shared with Samuel de Champlain 400 years ago.

I ask the Premier: Will she encourage her members to end their arrogance, to come to Nipissing and change their view of the north?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Bill Mauro: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: It's great to have two northern Ontario ministers talking about how great northern Ontario is, Mr. Speaker.

Also, I would like, too, Mr. Speaker, to take you on a stroll through fantastic northern Ontario. As the opposition party members should know, we have 100,000 more people with expanded broadband throughout the north, a \$32-million investment made by this government. As you continue to stroll between North Bay and Sturgeon Falls, you'll see road construction with a BuildON sign that shows that this government is continuing to invest in northern Ontario.

As you work your way to Sault Ste. Marie and see the nearly \$6 billion that we've invested since 2003 in the northern highways program, health care, seven new hospitals—I was just in Sault Ste. Marie making an announcement about more funding coming to the Soo from this government. We have continued to invest in beautiful northern Ontario. We will continue to do so every single time they vote against it.

Interjections.

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

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the minister of energy defended the \$5.5-million hydro ad campaign by saying, "It's important for the government to inform the public of government programs and help them to budget."

How much money did the Liberal government spend in the last decade or so to help people budget for the 300% increase in hydro rates?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, let me just say that it is important for people in this province to know about the programs that are in place. On electricity pricing, for example, the OESP that is in place to support low-income Ontarians, on top of the 25% reduction they have

seen over the summer: It's important that people know about those programs.

I've met people who are no longer students, but who want to go back to school. They didn't know that they were eligible for free tuition.

So whether it's advertising about the fair hydro plan or whether it's advertising about the changes to OSAP, it is important that everyone in Ontario knows what is available to them so that they can access programs that will help them in their lives. That's what the advertising is about, whether it's about tuition or lower electricity prices.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: These ads are a desperate attempt by the Liberal government to put out ads that are very similar to campaign ads. They are trying to convince the people of Ontario that they are doing something to reduce their bills when we know that's not the case. They do not inform Ontarians of any action or program that they can actually sign up for as a result of this particular ad.

In fact, the advertisements about the low-income support program that the Premier references are a separate package of ads, and they sure as heck weren't funded at the \$5.5-million price tag that the more partisan ads the Liberals have put forward are.

Why is this Premier putting the interests of herself and her Liberal Party, once again, ahead of Ontario families who are struggling just to keep the lights on and put food on the table?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Energy will want to comment on the specifics of the ads—except to say, Mr. Speaker, let me just be clear that all those ads point people to a website that gives the information. I know the leader of the third party understands that you can't put all the information in one ad. But every one of those ads either gives some explicit information or points people to a website where they can get the information they need, whether it's about a support program on lower electricity prices or whether it's about how to access free tuition, or, in the case of the OHIP+, to make sure that people know that starting in January children from zero through to their 25th birthday will have access to free prescription medication. People need to have that information because if they don't know that, then they won't know that all they need is their health card to go into a pharmacy and get their prescription filled.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, internal government documents confirm that the reason the Premier wanted this ad campaign was to "combat negative media coverage of rising electricity bills." That was the purpose of these ads. That was the reason for this particular ad buy.

Can the Premier tell us how combatting negative media coverage for the Liberal Party will help Ontario families pay their soaring hydro bills?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I have been very clear that we recognized that electricity prices were going up too fast and too far. We had made billions of dollars of investment in the electricity system, and we recognized that what we were already doing—we had made changes. We had renegotiated the Samsung agreement, taken billions of dollars out of the system, but still there was more that needed to be done. So we made changes. We put new programs in place, like the OESP. We took a 25% reduction off people's bills. We put programs in place for businesses. We changed the parameters around the ICI program, which was originally for larger businesses and was then redesigned to accommodate smaller businesses.

Those pieces of information are available on the website. The ads drive people to the website so they can get that information. People need to know what their government is doing. They need to know how they can benefit. That's what the advertising is about.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Yesterday, the President of the Treasury Board had a different explanation for why the Liberal government thought it was necessary to spend \$5.5 million on these partisan ads. She said it was because people find their hydro bills quite confusing. Maybe the minister should spend more time actually speaking to Ontarians, because no one I've talked to is having any trouble understanding their bill. People are worried because their bills are too high. That's the problem people have with their electricity bills.

When will this Premier stop spending money on partisan ads and actually do something to help people struggling to keep up with their sky-high hydro bills?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I don't know if this will come as a surprise to the leader of the third party, but there are a number of things that government has to do at the same time.

Yes, we have reduced electricity bills by an average of 25%, for all the reasons that I outlined earlier. We knew that there were concerns. We knew that people were struggling with their bills. We had made changes, but it wasn't enough so we have made further changes.

On top of that, I believe—and I have looked at many electricity bills from around the province, as has the Minister of Energy and a number of our colleagues, and they're all different. They are confusing. Some of them are less confusing than others. I think that it is responsible that we would look at a way of simplifying those bills.

But that's not the only thing that we're doing. That's part of the change. The primary change is to lower people's electricity bills so that they can cope with those on a monthly basis.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The people of Ontario want a government that will actually lower their electricity bills, not spend millions and millions of public dollars on partisan ads talking about their \$40-billion borrowing scheme that the Financial Accountability Officer says is going to cause the electricity rates in this province to jump even higher.

When will this government unveil the ad campaign to help Ontarians budget for the huge rate hikes that are coming down the road pretty quickly, as the FAO has warned about?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The people of Ontario have a government that has actually lowered their electricity prices. People, on average, have seen a 25% reduction this summer. In those rural and northern communities that we were just talking about in the House, people have seen up to a 40%-to-50% reduction because, on top of the electricity bill, the distribution cost was very, very high in many of those more remote communities, and that has been reduced.

That is the work that we have done. We have talked with consumers and experts all over this province. We have made those reductions. We will continue to work to find ways to support people, making sure that people on low incomes can pay their electricity bills and that businesses can pay their electricity bills.

People across this province have seen an average 25% reduction this summer.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The people of Ontario have a government that increased hydro rates by 300% and sold off Hydro One to their friends. That's the kind of government that the people of Ontario have.

The Minister of Energy said that he thinks that these ads are necessary because they promote a program to help people pay for their soaring bills. That's incorrect, Speaker.

Minister Sandals thinks that these ads are necessary because the people of Ontario don't understand their hydro bills. That's incorrect, Speaker.

These ads were designed with the express purpose of countering bad media coverage for the Liberal Party. Will the Premier admit that this ad campaign is designed to benefit her party and commit right now to stop spending money from the public purse on partisan ads that help her Liberal Party?

Interjections.

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

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: The leader of the third party has it completely wrong. The only people who are benefiting from these ads are the people of Ontario, learning about the 25% reduction that each and every one of them is getting—along with the website. If they actually watch the ads, rather than just complain about them—but if they watch the ads and look at what's in the

ads, we are talking about the programs and we are talking about how to find out more information about how we're reducing your rates even more, if you need more help. That help is included with the OESP program.

Just this month, another 5,100 people have signed up. That is important, because now we have over 232,000 people receiving the benefits that they need. And do you know what, Mr. Speaker? They're getting this benefit despite the opposition. Despite the rhetoric that's coming, they're actually receiving help. This government will continue to put programs in place and let the people of Ontario know that these programs are there to help them.

1130

TAXATION

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question today is to the Premier. Small businesses are the backbones of our communities, and yet Liberals do as they always do: attack them. Right now, the federal Liberals are pushing forward tax changes that would leave some in Ontario paying a tax rate of 73%. This push is despite 94% of small business owners saying that the Trudeau government's tax changes will hurt Canadian businesses and their families. These tax changes could shutter stores along main streets across the province of Ontario.

Will the Premier help put an end to these dangerous Liberal tax hikes?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am going to let the question stand, but make sure that in the preamble, you then direct, to make sure that we're talking about policy that would assist. I just remind the member, for his supplemental.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The last time I checked, we're at Queen's Park, and we're not in the Parliament buildings in Ottawa. But that's a question, certainly, that he can ask his Conservative colleagues in Ottawa to ask.

How I'll respond is to say that this government is working tirelessly on behalf of small business people across this province. Just yesterday, we tabled a bill that entirely targets cutting back on red tape for small businesses. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it's not just the bill. It comes with a package that is the most ambitious package this province has embarked on in generations, to help reduce the cost of doing business in the province of Ontario and to open up our province to working better and helping to make it easier for small businesses to function.

Mr. Speaker, I will, in all likelihood, refer the supplementary to our champion for small business, the minister responsible for small business, but I look forward to the member's supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier: Gerry Macartney is chief executive officer and general manager of the London Chamber of Commerce. He summed the

Liberal message up nicely: "Dear Canadian businesses: Thanks, but we no longer need you."

Speaker, Liberals are painting hard-working small businesses as tax cheats, and have told them they're sitting in their gated communities eating cake. It's simply not the case. These changes will hurt our neighbours, our friends, our family farms and the stores we visit every day in our communities. We must fight for Ontario small business.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier denounce these tax hikes, and will she stand up for Ontario's small businesses?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The minister responsible for small business.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member for his supplementary question. Certainly, I've been on the road. I've had the opportunity to meet with chambers of commerce right across the province. I've had the opportunity to do multiple small business forums across the province, and that's an opportunity to hear their comments and to hear their concerns.

But let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, our government has one goal in common: We're going to grow small business in the province of Ontario to make them prosper and to make the jobs that Ontarians want.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. Today, for the fifth straight day in a row, a heat warning was issued for southern Ontario, which means an elevated risk of heat illness, especially for children.

In schools without air conditioning, students and education workers have been sweltering in classrooms hotter than 30 degrees—close to 40 degrees, with the humidex. Students are developing heat rashes, and parents are keeping their kids home, not just to keep them comfortable but to keep them safe. Teachers report that children are unable to concentrate, their learning compromised. Education workers struggle in the face of these unbearable conditions.

Does the Premier think that 30-degree classrooms are acceptable teaching and learning environments for Ontario's students and education workers?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. I know that when there is an unusually hot day like yesterday and today, it's uncomfortable in some classrooms. That's exactly why we are investing in our schools. We have put \$1.4 billion for repairs and renewal of our schools, to improve the learning environment for all students.

These investments are really left up to our local school boards, which have the flexibility to prioritize their needs. They have the flexibility to add air conditioning. I

know that there are some school boards that are making that a priority, adding areas in the school that can be commonly used as cooling areas, like the gym or the library, but these decisions are being made by our local schools for the best interests of our students.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: The Premier knows that school facility budgets are barely enough to maintain the current state of disrepair in Ontario's schools, much less fix the accumulated \$15-billion backlog. This is not just an issue during heat alerts; the repair backlog increases the likelihood of broken boilers in the dead of winter, forcing children to wear winter coats in the classroom just to stay warm.

Years of neglect under both the Liberals and the Conservatives have brought our schools to a tipping point. Heat waves are becoming hotter and more frequent. We need a concrete plan to address extreme classroom temperatures and create safe working and learning environments for students and education workers. Will the Premier commit today to implementing such a plan?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: We are prioritizing and implementing a plan to continue to invest in our schools, and that includes building brand new schools. We've actually built 760 new schools across this province, and done extensive renovations and additions to over 860 schools, and we are continuing to do so.

The understanding that we have to continue to have upgrades and renewals to our schools is absolutely there. But when it comes to local decision-making and flexibility, we know that our school principals and our teachers have that understanding of the needs within their classrooms, and they are able to change where the classroom is happening. They can move students outside; I've visited schools where they have done so.

We want to have our local school boards and educators making these local decisions.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is for the minister responsible for early years and child care. Minister, I'm proud that our government is committed to ensuring families have access to quality and affordable—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Nepean-Carleton, come to order.

Finish, please.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: In my riding of Barrie, I have a lot of working families who are looking for care when they need it the most: before and after work. I have heard from families that there just aren't enough child care options that fit their schedules.

I know that the families of my students at Terry Fox school in Barrie are very appreciative for the great care their children receive before and after school, but more and more families need the peace of mind that this kind of care gives.

I want to ensure that we're providing child care options for these families. Can the minister responsible

for early years and child care tell us what the government is doing to make sure families' needs are properly met?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you to the member from Barrie for this important question. I know the member has worked hard to address this issue for local families, and we know the workday doesn't begin and end for many families with the ring of a school bell.

Families today lead fast-paced, demanding lives, and we understand the vital role that before- and after-school care plays in the lives of parents and children. That is why our government committed to ensuring school boards now offer before- and after-school care for six- to 12-year-olds, a commitment we made to families in 2014. So, as of September this year, where there is sufficient demand, families can now expect before- and after-school programs in their local schools. I think it's fantastic. We're making it easier for families to head off to work and not worry about where their kids are before and after school. It's a key step that we're giving families the flexibility they're looking for and the support they need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you to the minister for that answer. It is encouraging to know that the government is working to address the needs of Ontario families. Can the minister tell us more about how families can access these programs and where they can find them?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to answer the member's question. In fact, just last week I was at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic School in Toronto. It is one of the many great schools in Ontario that is offering before- and after-school care for families. I was able to share the progress that we've made on our commitment to families in Ontario.

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Speaker, I am proud to tell the House today that 83% of schools in Ontario are now offering before- and after-school programs for four-to-12-year-olds. Just think about that. This step is making life easier for thousands of families across the province. Since the last school year, we have seen an increase of 16,000 more licensed spaces for four-to-12-year-olds, so 16,000 more children now have access to the quality care they need when they need it. Parents can feel at ease heading to work, knowing that they have child care options, because when our children succeed, we all succeed.

TAXATION

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Premier: For many years, farm families have been encouraged by the Ontario government to sharpen their pencils, run their operation more like a business and, if warranted, incorporate. As farmers, we were told to think about the next generation and plan for the continuity of the farm within the family. Farmers were told to do succession planning and tax planning by incorporating.

Many farmers took the advice of your government but will now be punished by punitive tax measures from your

federal cousins. Premier, have you challenged this tax grab on farm corporations with the Prime Minister? We ask: Why will you not join us in fighting these tax hikes, so the coming generation of young farmers can afford to buy their parents' farms?

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: Name one farmer in favour of these tax hikes—

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

First of all, when I say “Thank you,” your question is over. Second of all, when I stand, you sit.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, this is a question that perhaps Andrew Scheer would like to be asking in the House of Commons. I think an effective opposition in Ottawa might actually be asking these questions—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ahem.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The opposition in Ottawa might want to be asking these questions, as opposed to asking a member in a provincial Legislature to ask a question.

I know that the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is going to want to talk about all the things that we are doing to support farmers, but I will just make one comment: In the recent conversations about NAFTA, we have been extremely clear that in Ontario, we are supportive of our agriculture sector. We will continue to support supply management, and we will do that in the face of any incursions that the Americans might want to make on that. We believe in our farm sector, and we support them.

Interjections.

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

Interjection: He stands, you sit.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I stand, you be quiet.

Supplementary? The member from Huron–Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Again, back to the Premier: Last week, at the International Plowing Match, the Premier praised Ontario's agri-food sector, saying, “Farming in Ontario is a critical part of our economy. It's a \$37-billion industry that translates into more than 700,000 jobs”—and that number is growing. “It's fundamental to who we are as Ontarians.”

Speaker, I couldn't agree more, but I have to ask: Why, then, is the Premier choosing to do nothing for this sector? The Liberal Premier of Nova Scotia is standing up for farmers, so why doesn't the Premier of Ontario stand up to the federal government on behalf of Ontario farmers?

This Premier has imposed a flood of new costs on farmers, and now the federal government is about to attack our farmers with even more taxes. Will the Premier stand up for Ontario farmers, a group she called critical to our economy, and demand, just like the Premier of Nova Scotia—

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

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I appreciate the question, the supplementary from the member from Huron–Bruce. I can say that we have been in contact with the Honourable Lawrence MacAulay, the federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, to express our concerns, particularly when it comes to succession planning for family farms in the province of Ontario.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to remind everybody that when this government brought forward an initiative to fund a \$100-million Risk Management Program and the government of Ontario was funding 40% of the program, they sat and did nothing—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Huron–Bruce.

Hon. Jeff Leal: —to bring in the federal program to match it. And they're all supporting Maxime Bernier, who wanted to get rid of supply management for Ontario farmers.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order, please. I did ask the member from Huron–Bruce to come to order once already, and I don't want to have to say it a second time.

New question.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. Months ago I explained to you in this House that Woodbine Entertainment had implemented a stabling policy that was designed to kill the Fort Erie Race Track and the thousands of jobs that go with it. The attack on the racetrack began with the removal of the slots and 300 jobs and being excluded from the racing alliance. Woodbine Entertainment expanded to run B-class horses in a direct assault on Fort Erie, and the flow of off-track betting revenue to Fort Erie was stopped.

Premier, you committed to keeping racetracks open in Ontario, including rural Ontario tracks like Fort Erie. It has been four months since you made that commitment. Time has run out. Will you intervene to save the Fort Erie Race Track and the thousands of jobs that depend on it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We're absolutely committed to the long-term sustainability of the horse racing industry in this province. That's why our Horse Racing Partnership Plan invests \$100 million a year in this very important industry. It's also why, even though government doesn't dictate to businesses with regard to their business decisions, we did intervene on that particular matter. Through constructive discussions with both Fort Erie and Woodbine, Woodbine increased their stabling policy.

I know the Minister of Agriculture and Food will probably have more to say about that. This minister is an unbridled champion of the horse racing industry. I know that he's absolutely chomping at the bit to get into this in the supplementary, so I'll probably pass the supplementary to him, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is again to the Premier. You're right when you talk about businesses, but when you're giving Woodbine \$62 million in purse money, you have a say. And when they're attacking the Fort Erie Race Track, on behalf of the people of Niagara Falls, you have an obligation to fix it.

Premier, you stood there and told me that you were committed to the survival of the Fort Erie Race Track and of small racetracks. Our racetrack has been continuously operating for 120 years. Your inaction to stop Woodbine Entertainment's attempt to create a monopoly in thoroughbred racing in Ontario will lead to thousands of job losses in Niagara. Over the course of the last four months, myself and numerous stakeholders have met with the Minister of Finance and have met with the Minister of Agriculture. Fort Erie Racing, the mayor, SEIU and the community have done all the right things.

Premier, you need to protect the Fort Erie Race Track, and we need to be a permanent member of the racing alliance. Will you act on your commitment and ensure that the Fort Erie Race Track remains open and the thousands of jobs are protected?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member from Niagara Falls for his supplementary.

We did take action. When we became aware that Woodbine had changed its stabling policy, we convened a meeting. The member from Niagara Falls was part of it, the member from St. Catharines was part of it, the Minister of Finance was part of it, I was part of it, Ontario Racing was part of it and the Ontario lottery corporation. We did make a change to assist Fort Erie.

We do know that this government has committed to 15 tracks' sustainability in the long-term here in the province of Ontario: two thoroughbred tracks, a quarter horse track and 12 standardbred tracks.

We brought in a change. We understand that the change needs to be looked at again. It's going to be our opportunity, when the season finishes at Fort Erie on October 17. We're asking Ontario Racing to take a look at this, to make sure a new policy is put in place for 2018.

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PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Speaker, when I'm talking to

members in my community of Davenport, matters regarding transit and transportation always end up being some of the most pressing topics of conversation, and such was true this past weekend. Whether that conversation is about creating more bike-friendly communities or improved access to the GO network, residents in Davenport expect government to listen, and to make critical investments that will improve their daily lives.

However, I'm aware that last week the member from Kitchener–Conestoga—also the Conservative transportation critic—spoke to some members of my community about the party opposite's plan or lack thereof.

Would the minister please provide more information on our government's plan to build transit while also listening to the needs of local communities and, more importantly, my community of Davenport?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Of course, I want to begin by thanking the MPP from Davenport for her question and also for her unparalleled advocacy for her community, and specifically for her advocacy around this particular issue.

Speaker, this August we issued a request for qualifications for a grade separation at the Davenport Diamond which will allow us to deliver enhanced GO service to more communities around the region. Because of the member from Davenport's advocacy on behalf of her community, this project also includes enhancements to the public realm, including artwork and new pedestrian and cyclist routes.

Let me be clear: Metrolinx has committed to fully funding the public realm enhancements that were depicted in the initial design for both the overpass and the parks. And I want to say explicitly here in this Legislature, that's happening because the MPP from Davenport fought long and hard and successfully to make sure that we got it right.

We also know that noise is another key concern for the community. That's why, prior to electrification of the Barrie corridor, Metrolinx has also committed to capping the number of trains at 36 per day. Post-electrification, we're looking at additional measures to further reduce disruption in the community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I want to thank the minister for his answer.

I know that members of my community are paying very close attention to how this project moves forward and how we plan to continue to engage with the community. I'm very proud of the work of the countless advocates in Davenport, including those who are part of the community advisory committee and those who have attended consultations over the last number of years. Community consultations and feedback have made and continue to make this project stronger. They made these public realm enhancements possible, and these enhancements are in addition to the proposed new Bloor–Davenport GO station.

Speaker, when the member from Kitchener–Conestoga was in my riding last week, he spoke about a number of

projects beyond the Davenport Diamond, yet he didn't commit to moving forward on anything.

Unlike the party opposite, I know our government is making progress. Would the minister please update us on what else our government is doing to improve connections and make commuting more convenient for residents in Davenport?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member for her follow-up question.

There is a lot of exciting progress that's taking place around transit and transportation in Davenport. For example, we are moving forward with the Eglinton Crosstown LRT, a \$5.3-billion investment that is being made by our government. On that project, this summer we officially installed the first piece of track on the line, bringing us one step closer to its completion by 2021.

Also this summer, we announced the completion of the widening of the Dufferin Street bridge. As part of this project, we are partnering with Toronto to extend the West Toronto Railpath multi-use trail for pedestrians and cyclists.

Most recently, Metrolinx announced that we are moving forward on a critical pedestrian link to connect the Bloor Union Pearson and GO station with the Dundas West subway station, which is critically important for commuters in the west end of Toronto.

Our government is absolutely committed to making the necessary investments in communities across the province, including, of course, in Davenport.

Again, Speaker, I want to thank the member from Davenport for her exceptional work.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, as you know, on June 1, my private member's resolution was debated and received support from all three parties in this Legislature. The resolution asks the government to immediately approve the planning grants requested by both the Collingwood General and Marine Hospital and Stevenson Memorial Hospital in Alliston, thereby allowing both hospitals to proceed with stage 2 of much-needed redevelopments.

Well, Minister, that was almost four months ago, and we've heard nothing since. The only thing the hospitals need is your approval and that of your government. Minister, will your government support my resolution? Will you follow through with this commitment and approve planning grants for these projects?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I do appreciate the question from the member opposite. The member, of course, knows that for some time, my ministry, the LHIN, the local hospital and the community have been working together on their planned investments, the efforts that they're making to improve the quality of health services even further in Collingwood and the surrounding area.

But the member also knows that there is a very deliberate and specific process that we work with, whether it's a hospital in Collingwood or anywhere in

this province, when we look at new investments. We do that very enthusiastically and very closely with local communities, to ensure that we get it right.

It's part of an unprecedented investment in hospital infrastructure which now, over the next 10 years, amounts to \$20 billion that we're investing specifically in new hospitals, hospital expansions and improvements.

This is a project that, obviously, we've been looking at together, and we'll continue to make sure that we're making the right steps forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the minister: Minister, you know that both hospitals, Alliston and Collingwood, are spending patients' front-line money. Both have spent over \$1.2 million of their operating budgets to do the planning so far.

We've been encouraged by the LHIN in both cases. We've been encouraged by your ministry and by yourself, and we appreciate that. But we're in a Catch-22 now. If you don't want to approve these projects, just tell us, and we'll stop planning for a while.

But we would like the opportunity to move forward. Pay the hospitals back for the patient money they've spent. Allow them to move forward. You don't have to approve the hundreds of millions that these things will eventually cost over 25 or 30 years. Just let them move to the next couple of stages. We'll have an election by the time they get to the next stage. They will have been paid back their money, you'll have done your part, and we'll see where we go from there.

But they need the opportunity to prove to you and the Premier and your colleagues in the government that they deserve to have these hospitals. All of the other hospitals in Simcoe county, Grey and Dufferin have been done in our time. These two have had nothing done to them.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We now have 35, I think it is, infrastructure projects involving hospitals, that are either under way in the construction phase or in various phases of planning. That is part of that capital investment that I referenced earlier. It's 35 or even more hospital infrastructure projects, and we announced, of course, in the recent budget further expansions and new builds like Trillium hospital in Mississauga, and in Windsor and in Niagara.

These are critically important investments, and they are no more important than hospitals such as the ones in Alliston and Collingwood. We are following that process. I have a very capable, hard-working division within my ministry that does solely that, working with the LHIN, working with the local community.

I want to end, Mr. Speaker, by saying that I deeply appreciate the member opposite's advocacy for his community, for these two hospitals. I hope we'll continue to work together to advance those two projects.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Last summer, a senior in Ottawa was assaulted

in his long-term-care home. Just last week, city officials responsible for long-term care in Ottawa went before city council to talk about what they need to make homes in the region safer. The overwhelming opinion from city staff and councillors was that long-term-care staff are doing the best they can with what they're given, but they're not given enough.

When will the Premier start taking the crisis in long-term care seriously, and expand the Wettlaufer inquiry to look at systemic issues like funding levels?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I and this government and the Premier take very, very seriously the safety, security and well-being of anyone—predominantly, but not exclusively—residing in our long-term-care homes across this province.

I am proud to say that as a result of the inspection regime that this government brought in in 2014, we're seeing the effect of those annual inspections. So 100% of long-term-care homes are inspected, and what we've seen since 2004 is that the average number of compliance orders issued during an annual inspection has actually gone down by more than 50%. As a result of this increased scrutiny, we're seeing the impact in our homes.

It's not a perfect system. There are many examples where we need to improve, and I agree with the member opposite on that. But we have to be cognizant that improvements are taking place.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the overwhelming opinion of Ottawa councillors and city staff was that long-term-care homes are underfunded by the province and have serious problems because of that. In fact, homes across this province have the same serious problems—homes in Hamilton, homes in London, in Kingston, in Sudbury, in Thunder Bay, in Windsor and all across this province.

Why won't this government listen to councillors, staff in Ottawa and all of those loved ones who come here to plead with the government to do the right thing, recognize that there is actually a crisis in long-term care in this province and expand the Wettlaufer inquiry to include all of the systemic issues that are causing this crisis to occur?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We are increasing our funding to long-term-care homes. We've more than doubled that funding allocation since coming into office in 2003.

Even as recently as this year's budget, which that party and that leader of the third party voted against, we increased our funding to long-term-care homes by more than \$80 million. That increase included \$60 million going directly into resident care needs, specialized supports for convalescent care, and physiotherapy for a wide range of health needs, and \$10 million going into behavioural supports. We have more than \$50 million annually now going to those most complex patients, including individuals with dementia. And we increased

the raw food envelope for long-term care by 6.5%—even more than we were asked to by the sector. So an \$80-million investment this year alone that that party adamantly and specifically voted against.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure. Every member of this House knows that our province is leading in unprecedented investments in infrastructure. Sadly, that did not stop the Leader of the Opposition and the member from Dufferin–Caledon from suggesting that we're underinvesting and that we aren't getting shovels in the ground.

The fact is, that suggestion couldn't be further from the truth. We are building and repairing schools, hospitals and public transit because we're committed to making everyday life easier for the people of Ontario. In my riding of Kitchener Centre, the province has invested in a new LRT system, four new schools and an expansion to a local hospital. All you have to do is a quick check on Ontario.ca/buildon and it will show you that shovels are in the ground in every riding in this province.

Could the minister please speak to how these historic investments stack up against the opposition's dismal track record?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Thanks to the member for the question. Last week, the member for Dufferin–Caledon was questioning our government's commitment to infrastructure, but neither the NDP nor the PCs took infrastructure seriously when they were in office. In 2001-02 the PCs spent only \$1.9 billion for Ontario's infrastructure needs, while our government has been averaging over \$11 billion per year.

Our plan is building better lives for people in Ontario by delivering \$300 million annually to smaller communities, including over \$53 million to PC ridings. We are investing over \$20 billion in transit. We're contributing \$270 million to nearly 1,400 water and waste water projects. We've committed \$100 million to natural gas and \$280 million to broadband expansion.

Speaker, the opposition needs to do a fact check.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My thanks to the minister for his answer. It's important for every member of House and every constituent that we represent to have the facts as we move forward with our \$190-billion plan to build better lives in Ontario. That's because infrastructure is about much more than just buildings and construction. It's about growing the economy and enhancing quality of life. The evidence tells a very compelling story about our investments and how they're paying off.

Just yesterday, the construction industry representatives that I met with from my region told me that this past year has been the best year ever for them in their 30 years of being in business, and they thanked me.

Ontario's unemployment rate is the lowest it has been in 16 years, and we've added over 750,000 new jobs since the height of the recent recession.

Could the minister please address concerns about so-called underspending by sharing the facts?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Thank you again for the question. A number of projects were awaiting approval by federal authorities. Any suggestion that we are underinvesting in infrastructure is simply not accurate.

Here are some facts for the members. Fact: We are making the largest infrastructure investment in Ontario's history—an unprecedented \$190 billion over three years. Fact: Communities in Dufferin–Caledon are receiving nearly \$8 million in funding through the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund and \$2.7 million through the Clean Water and Wastewater Fund—over \$10 million. Fact: The Leader of the Opposition rose in this House last week to criticize us for underfunding but he failed to mention that he and his entire caucus voted against our budget, which included an additional \$30 billion for critical infrastructure.

It is absurd that the opposition is criticizing us for supposedly not spending enough when they voted against spending—

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

TAXATION

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Premier. After hearing from small business owners from around the province, it's clear that the Liberals' tax hikes will hurt them and our economy overall.

Despite hearing from Premier Brian Pallister, Premier Stephen McNeil and BC's Minister of Finance, Carole James—all expressing their concern that these changes will hurt their communities—Ontarians have yet to hear a word from our Premier or this government.

As the Premier knows, over a decade ago the government of Ontario allowed doctors to incorporate in lieu of fee increases. Today, 70% of doctors in Ontario have done just that and incorporated and operate small businesses in our province.

Will the Premier stand with her provincial counterparts in Manitoba, Nova Scotia and British Columbia? Will she help stop these Liberal tax hikes and stand up for small business owners?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister responsible for small business.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member for the question. All Ontarians can rest assured that the Premier of Ontario stands for the Premier of Ontario. We do know that she has been engaged with the federal finance minister, the Prime Minister and others with regard to those tax changes.

I think the member should be writing some questions for the Leader of the Opposition in Ottawa, Mr. Scheer. Is his talent so bad in Ottawa that he can't get anybody to write questions? I suggest to the member: Send the question to Ottawa and allow him to ask it.

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

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1208 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AMANDA BRODHAGEN

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd like to celebrate today the remarkable achievements of a young woman from Ellice township in Perth county named Amanda Brodhagen. Amanda has recently joined the team at the Rural Voice, a magazine printed in Blyth that covers news in Huron, Perth, Bruce, Grey, Wellington and Oxford counties.

Prior to joining the publication, she had the opportunity to participate in a mentorship with the Cattlemen's Young Leaders program, where she was paired with Saskatchewan MLA Dr. Lorne Hepworth. In an article, she said that it's thanks to this experience that she felt compelled to share how mentorship has helped give her a leg up in the agricultural industry. Incidentally, it has become a passion of hers.

It was this passion that generated recognition for her. She was selected as one of nine women across the country, and the only one from rural Canada, to be featured in a #GoGetFeatured contest run by Fido and Flare magazine. She had her first photo shoot, and she's featured online with the magazine.

She also shared her dream of working with an agricultural women's network to establish a mentorship program for women. The Speaker might recall that when the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians hosted their outreach program in Ontario in 2015, Amanda was one of the people who participated. I like to think we helped inspire her as well, in some small way.

Amanda's experiences growing up on her family's beef cattle farm, coupled with her youthful perspective on local issues and passion for helping and inspiring others, will make her a wonderful addition to the publication's roster of freelance writers. Congratulations, Amanda.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do remember, and yes, indeed, you should take credit.

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 6

Mr. Paul Miller: I rise to address an issue that has been eating away at me for quite a while now: the Ministry of Community and Social Services Amendment Act, also known as Bill 6. This good piece of legislation is going to create an evidence-based research commission that would make recommendations to our government on what Ontario's social assistance rates should be year to year and in each region. This is an effective way to deal with poverty.

This bill has come before this House many times, and each time it has been passed with flying colours on

second reading. The last time this happened, Premier Wynne even stood up with her Liberal colleagues and applauded it.

The Liberals have had plenty of opportunity to pass this bill since then. They are letting the bill sit, preventing it from going before committee, hoping that it's going to wither and die. It's ironic that the advocate of a similar bill was Liberal Ted McMeekin.

There are many strong advocacy groups in my riding and the city of Hamilton that have fought tooth and nail to see Bill 6 pass: the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, Hamilton Organizing for Poverty Elimination, the Campaign for Adequate Welfare and Disability Benefits, and the advocacy committee for Bill 6—throughout the province. I commend them for their dedication. I hope that the Liberals won't let their efforts go for naught.

I stand in this House today not with a question, but a request of the government: Don't let impoverished Ontarians continue to suffer. Do the right thing and bring Bill 6 forward.

AGNES DEVLIN

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to say a few words about Agnes Devlin, who passed away in Ottawa last week. I have to say, I had only known Agnes for about two years. I got to meet her at Alta Vista Manor, where my in-laws live. I'm there quite frequently, visiting. I got to know her over two years.

What I found, actually, in the wonderful words that I found in the Ottawa Citizen this morning, were some things about Agnes that I didn't know—that she was a woman of great strength, love and faith; a wonderful mother not only to her own children but also to many others, always ready to expand the family dinner to include someone who might be alone.

Agnes lived by the maxim, "Not all of can do great things, but we can all do small things with great love." She was always there to answer the call whenever there was a need that she became aware of. Her great love guided her action. She was a tireless worker for the poor.

And she did great things. The most enduring was as a founding member and volunteer of the Shepherds of Good Hope, where she was a committed volunteer for 25 years. The Agnes Devlin Volunteer Award, of which she was the first recipient, continues to be awarded by the Shepherds of Good Hope.

She was renowned for her ability to turn the food that was available into a great meal.

Agnes lived a full life. I will miss her. Whenever I went to visit Alta Vista Manor, I would say, "Hi, Agnes, how you doing?" She'd say, "Not too bad. How are you, love?" consistently. I'm going to miss that.

Agnes raised up the people around her with her deep faith, her devotion, her charity. To Agnes's children and their families and indeed all of those who are grieving the loss: A life filled with kindness, both great and small, is something to celebrate.

BUSTING OUT

Mr. Monte McNaughton: On Thursday, September 14, the Strathroy Middlesex Hospital Alliance held its fifth annual Busting Out event, raising funds for new diagnostic equipment in SMHA's breast assessment program. The key to this program is that local women may receive breast cancer diagnosis, treatment and even reconstructive surgery at their local hospital. Because of this early assessment program, doctors have been able to detect and diagnose one new unsuspected case of breast cancer per week. SMHA surgeons have committed to seeing new patients within 14 days of diagnosis.

Finally, thanks to the efforts of the local community, the breast assessment program has fundraised for all-new diagnostic equipment. Over the last four years, more than \$116,000 has been raised at Busting Out for breast cancer services in the many communities surrounding Strathroy. Congratulations to all those involved in this worthy local cause and to all who have made generous contributions.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I rise to address the impact of regional express rail on my community. A rail line cuts diagonally across my riding and currently Metrolinx is planning to increase all-day commuter traffic on the line very substantially.

The summer of 2016, I canvassed from one end of the line to the other in my riding to let people know what was happening and to hear their concerns. I welcome the investment in transit and the upgrade to electrified trains from diesel, and so do most of my constituents. At the same time, the communities that run alongside the rail are very concerned about the increase in noise and vibration, as well as the potential large-scale loss of trees that provide a visual screen along the length of the line. Trains that now pass people's homes every 15 minutes will be passing their homes every two to three minutes. This will have a substantial impact.

Again, people know that action has to be taken to address congestion, but they also believe they should be treated fairly and that there needs to be substantial investment to reduce the impact on their homes. I will be convening a meeting with my constituents next Wednesday, October 4, at the Ralph Thornton Centre, starting at 7 p.m., to discuss the issues and to provide an opportunity for my constituents to question representatives from Metrolinx.

The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change will shortly be reviewing the Metrolinx application. I ask him to do all he can to address my constituents' concerns.

5AAB TV

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I rise today to talk about a leading channel with fantastic multicultural programming that is available 24 hours a day and seven days a week. 5Aab TV is celebrating two years serving the community

across the greater Toronto area and around the world, broadcasting on various platforms.

Saab TV offers the latest news and current affairs programming in Punjabi from Punjab, India and Canada, with studios in Amritsar, Jalandhar, Moga and Chandigarh in India, and Toronto in Canada. The 24/7 channel is available on iOS Apple and Android stores, and also on Bell and Rogers, with local and international news and total entertainment including music, comedies, movies, game shows and many, many more.

1510

Saab TV provides high-quality Punjabi informative programming with news, documentaries and discussions on local issues and talk shows through its exclusive content relationships with leading content providers in India and North America.

I want to congratulate my good friends Jassi Sarai and Prince Sandhu, and all the hosts and staff and volunteers at Saab TV as they celebrate their second anniversary.

This year, they also hosted their second free Canada Day celebration with thousands of people in attendance at the Bramalea GO station. This is an event that they will continue to host over the years and continue to grow. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate them on their success in such a short period of time.

VICTIM SERVICES LEEDS & GRENVILLE

Mr. Steve Clark: When a crisis happens in my riding, Victim Services Leeds & Grenville is there 24/7 to help people on the worst day of their lives, but today these workers are themselves in a crisis, one created by this government's chronic underfunding.

The role of victim services isn't limited to the first few hours of any incident. They're mandated to provide ongoing support. This includes developing safety plans for victims of sexual assault, domestic violence and human trafficking, yet base funding from the Attorney General only covers initial contact, and even then funding is totally inadequate as it's based on 849 new victims.

Here's the problem, Speaker: Last year, they had 1,175 new victims. They're on pace this year to be close to 2,000. You can imagine how this affects their staff. The stress of doing the impossible day after day has them overwhelmed, and I fear some may be at the breaking point.

The Attorney General knows this because the board wrote the ministry a year ago to warn about "the impact this situation is having on our staff's mental health and our ability to continue service delivery in a rural environment." Shamefully, it took over eight months to get a response that glossed over the crisis by describing the dramatic increase in cases as good news. That's unacceptable.

It's time the Attorney General answered the plea of victim services in my riding by increasing funding to match the reality they face.

ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY

Mr. Han Dong: Last winter, I had the pleasure of attending a mess dinner at HMCS York in my riding of Trinity–Spadina where I was invited to their Canadian Leaders at Sea program. I rise today to thank both Lieutenant Commander Kray Robichaud and Vice-Admiral Ron Lloyd and the Royal Canadian Navy for this rare opportunity to learn more about our naval forces.

Canada's navy has a proud tradition since its founding in 1910. In the Battle of the Atlantic the navy completed 25,343 crossings and Canada lost 24 ships and 1,797 sailors, unfortunately. It was these supplies that helped change the outcome of the war.

Currently, a new fleet of ships is being built to replace the old frigates. These ships will improve the fleet's ability to perform their duties while promoting economic growth across Canada.

Our navy may not be the biggest in size, but its sailors' professionalism, skill and passion is second to none in the world. In Commodore Skearpin's words, "I challenge you to find one sailor who doesn't love his or her job."

Speaker, I'd like to tell you a brief story. While on the tour, I asked a young bomb disposal specialist, "Why would you choose such a dangerous job?" He said, "Well, sir, I'm good at it, and someone has to do it."

I encourage the House to join me in recognizing our sailors' bravery, commitment and sacrifice in protecting us and what Canada stands for.

WIARTON WILLIE

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise to say a few words on this most solemn occasion. After 11 successful years as the world's most famous weather prognosticating groundhog, Warton Willie passed away in his home in Warton on Saturday, September 16. Willie was 13, but he lived three times longer than your average groundhog.

As a former coordinator of the Groundhog Day festival, I can attest to the fact that our community has been so fortunate to have Willie, a unique albino prognosticator like no other. So to Pennsylvania's Punxsutawney Phil, Nova Scotia's Shubenacadie Sam, Balzac Billy the Prairie Prognosticator and all the other Willie wannabees, I have to say sorry, but none of you stack up to our Warton Willie.

This has been a rough couple of months for the South Bruce Peninsula community. Willie's passing comes just one month after the passing of the founder of the Warton Willie Festival, the iconic Mac McKenzie, who, together with the help of many dedicated volunteers and sponsors, made February 2 a major family festival for the town of Warton.

Since it started in 1956, the Groundhog Day festival has been helping fill local hotels, restaurants and shops, and helped support the economy of our entire region. Thousands of visitors have come annually to see if Willie

will see his shadow and forecast six more weeks of winter or an early spring. Willie has put Wiarton on the worldwide tourism map. In Willie's honour, the community will be holding a state funeral with speeches in celebration of his life on Saturday, September 30, at 11 a.m. in Wiarton's Bluewater Park.

But without a shadow of a doubt, the community of Wiarton and South Bruce Peninsula will be ready for next year's Groundhog Day. In fact, there is word that Willie's two-year-old understudy will assume the starring role representing Wiarton as the world's foremost weather prognosticator. I invite all members to join us in Wiarton on Feb 2, 2018, and meet wee Willie.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Could you read that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm tempted, but I'm not going to say anything.

I thank all members for their statements.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated September 26, 2017, 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

DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE PROTECTION ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LA PROTECTION CONTRE LA VIOLENCE FAMILIALE ET SEXUELLE

Ms. Horwath moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 157, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and the Occupational Health and Safety Act with respect to domestic and sexual violence / Projet de loi 157, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi et la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail en ce qui concerne la violence familiale et sexuelle.

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.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The bill amends the Employment Standards Act, 2000, to provide that an employee who has been employed by an employer for at least 13 consecutive weeks and who has experienced domestic or sexual violence, or the threat of domestic or sexual

violence, is entitled to up to 10 days of paid leave and up to 15 weeks of unpaid leave.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act is also amended to require employers to ensure that every supervisor and worker receives information and instruction about domestic violence in the workplace and sexual violence in the workplace.

PROTECTING VULNERABLE ROAD USERS ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 SUR LA PROTECTION DES USAGERS DE LA ROUTE VULNÉRABLES

Ms. DiNovo moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 158, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of harm to vulnerable road users / Projet de loi 158, Loi modifiant le Code de la route à l'égard des dommages causés aux usagers de la route vulnérables.

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.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The bill amends the Highway Traffic Act. It is about the legal consequences of a collision that seriously injures or kills a pedestrian, cyclist, mobility device user, roadway worker, emergency responder outside their motor vehicle, or another individual listed in the bill.

The driver who caused the injury or death is guilty of an offence if they caused it by breaking one of the rules of the road listed in the bill. The listed rules include rules about unlicensed driving, driving while intoxicated, driving while using a cellphone, speeding, careless driving, disobeying signs or lights at intersections or pedestrian crossovers, proper signaling, sharing the road, safety near emergency vehicles, safely opening car doors, and other rules.

1520

A driver convicted of an offence is subject to the consequences for breaking the rule and to a mandatory probation order. The order will require the driver to take a driving instruction course and perform community service. The community service must include activity related to improving driving safety and public education on driving safely. The driver's licence will be suspended during the probation.

The driver must also attend the sentencing hearing. Victim impact statements may be presented during the sentencing hearing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Further introduction of bills? Introduction of bills? Last call for introduction of bills.

Statements by ministries? Statements by ministries? Last call—

Hon. Brad Duguid: Motions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Did I miss motions?

Hon. Brad Duguid: You did.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, I put my checkmarks in the wrong spot. I'm sorry. I will come back to motions.

MOTIONS

APPOINTMENT OF TEMPORARY FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

Hon. Brad Duguid: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the appointment of a temporary Financial Accountability Officer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Minister.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That an humble address be presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council as follows:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, request the appointment of the Honourable J. David Wake as temporary Financial Accountability Officer as provided in the Financial Accountability Officer Act, 2013, S.O. 2013, c. 4., and section 77(c) of the Legislation Act, 2006, commencing on September 26, 2017 for a term of six months, or until the effective date of appointment of a permanent Financial Accountability Officer, whichever comes first."

And that the address be engrossed—whatever that means—and presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council by the Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll engross it.

The minister moves that an humble address be presented—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense.

Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

AUTOMOTIVE DEALERS

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Bill 3, the Cutting Red Tape for Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, 2016, is a vital tool that supports Ontario's auto sector by cutting red tape for dealers and consumers when a vehicle is purchased or leased; and

"Whereas, in 2011, the province of Ontario conducted a pilot project on in-house vehicle licensing at two new car dealerships that was well received by the participants; and

"Whereas the province of Quebec has permitted automobile dealers to conduct in-house vehicle registrations since 2003, with 700 dealers currently participating;

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

"That the government of Ontario immediately pass Bill 3 into law, to promote Ontario's auto retail sector by cutting red tape for motor vehicle dealers and consumers to save them time and money."

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

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Cindy Forster: I've got petitions here from Niagara, Orangeville and Guelph that read:

"Whereas a growing number of Ontarians are concerned about the growth in low-wage, part-time, casual, temporary and insecure employment; and

"Whereas too many workers are not protected by the minimum standards outlined in existing employment and labour laws; and

"Whereas the Ontario government is currently reviewing employment and labour laws in the province;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to change employment and labour laws to accomplish the following:

"—ensure that part-time, temporary, casual and contract workers receive the same pay and benefits as their full-time permanent counterparts;

"—promote full-time, permanent work with adequate hours for all those who choose it;

"—offer fair scheduling with proper advance notice;

"—provide at least seven (7) days of paid sick leave each year;

"—prevent employers from downloading their responsibilities for minimum standards onto temporary agencies, subcontractors or workers themselves;

"—end the practice of contract flipping, support wage protection and job security for workers when companies change ownership or contracts expire;

"—extend minimum protections to all workers by eliminating exemptions to the laws;

"—protect workers who stand up for their rights;

"—offer proactive enforcement of the laws through adequate public staffing and meaningful penalties for employers who violate the laws;

"—make it easier for workers to join unions; and

"—all workers must be paid at least \$15 an hour, regardless of their age, student status, job or sector of employment."

I agree with this petition. I will affix my signature and send it with page Javan.

WASAGA BEACH

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the town of Wasaga Beach relies on the largest freshwater beach in the world to attract visitors and drive its economy; and

“Whereas the town does not have traditional industry for jobs and employment and relies on tourism to maintain its business core; and

“Whereas the areas of the beach maintained by the province are in poor shape, overgrown with weeds and other vegetation; and

“Whereas the provincial government has been promising for years to replace old, vault-style washrooms with modern facilities; and

“Whereas Wasaga Beach is one of the most popular summer tourist destinations in the province of Ontario;

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

“To ask the government to take immediate action to properly maintain beach areas under its control in Wasaga Beach and that funding be provided as soon as possible to build new, modern washroom facilities to better serve the needs of the community and visitors to the beach.”

I, of course, agree with this petition and will sign it.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Ann McIntyre from North Bay for collecting over 400 names on this petition. It reads as follows:

“Time to Care.

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

“Whereas the provincial government does not provide adequate funding to ensure care and staffing levels in LTC homes to keep pace with residents’ increasing acuity and the growing number of residents with complex behaviours; and

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

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“Amend the LTC Homes Act (2007) for a legislated minimum care standard of four hours per resident per day adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

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

ENERGY STORAGE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are significant concerns raised with the procurement and environmental vetting of the NRStor CAES project in Goderich; and

“Whereas, despite all precautions, energy plants are inherently dangerous and should not be placed in urban areas, close to residential homes and a municipal daycare building; and

“Whereas the government is spending taxpayers’ dollars on additional energy projects despite the energy minister’s proclamation that Ontario has an abundance of energy; and

“Whereas this money could be instead used to provide health care, keep rural schools open, increase long-term-care needs and other services for the people of Ontario;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the government to cancel the NRStor CAES project proposed for Goderich.”

I’ll affix my signature to the petition and send it to the table with Nicola.

ANTI-SMOKING INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Terri Sharpe for sending this petition. It reads as follows:

“Whereas in the past 10 years in Ontario, 86% of all movies with on-screen smoking were rated for youth, and the tobacco industry has a well-documented history of promoting tobacco use on-screen; and

“Whereas a scientific report released by the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit estimated that 185,000 children in Ontario today will be recruited to smoking by exposure to on-screen smoking, and more than 59,000 will eventually die from tobacco-related diseases incurring at least \$1.1 billion in health care costs; and

“Whereas the Ontario government has a stated goal to achieve the lowest smoking rates in Canada, and 79% of Ontarians support not allowing smoking in movies rated G, PG, 14A...; and

“Whereas the Minister of Government and Consumer Services has the authority to amend the regulations of the Film Classification Act...;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“To examine the ways in which the regulations of the Film Classification Act could be amended to reduce smoking in youth-rated films released in Ontario.”

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

1530

GO TRANSIT

Mr. James J. Bradley: On behalf of the member for Cambridge, who, as a minister, is not allowed to present petitions, I am doing so.

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

“Whereas the current commuting options available for travel between the Waterloo region and the GTA are

inefficient and time-consuming, as well as environmentally damaging;

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

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

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

I'll be handing this petition to Michael in just one moment.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the government is spending millions of taxpayers' dollars on advertising that seems to be solely for the purpose of promoting the Liberal government for partisan political purposes; and

“Whereas the government did not feel the need to inform the people of Ontario by advertising any of the many hydro rate increases; and

“Whereas this money could be used to lower hydro costs for people who are choosing between heating their homes and buying essentials such as food; and

“Whereas this money could instead be used to provide health care, keep rural schools open, increase long-term-care beds and other services for the people of Ontario; and

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislature to call on the government to stop running partisan hydro ads with taxpayers' money.”

Thank you very much for allowing me to present this petition, as I agree with it.

PRIVATISATION DES BIENS PUBLICS

M. Taras Natyshak: J'ai une pétition intitulée « Privatiser Hydro One : une autre mauvaise décision ».

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

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

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

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

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

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

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

J'appuie cette pétition. Je vais la signer et l'envoyer avec le page Michael.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Collingwood General and Marine hospital is challenged to support the growing needs of the community within its existing space;

“Whereas a building condition assessment found the major systems of the hospital will require renewal within the next 10 years;

“Whereas substandard facilities exist in the emergency department; there is no space in the dialysis department to expand, and there is a lack of storage and crowding in many areas of the building; and, structurally, additional floors can't be added to the existing building to accommodate growth;

“Whereas there is no direct connection from the medical device repurposing department to the operating room;

“Whereas there is a lack of quiet rooms, interview rooms and lounge space;

“Whereas Collingwood General and Marine Hospital deserves equitable servicing comparable to other Ontario hospitals;

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

“That the government immediately provide the necessary funding to Collingwood General and Marine Hospital so that it can build a new hospital to serve the needs of the community.”

I, of course, agree with this and will sign the petition.

ORGAN DONATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from everywhere, but I'd like to thank Hélène Campbell for it. It goes as follows:

“Whereas Ontario is currently facing one of the worst organ shortages in the world with one person dying every three days waiting for an organ transplant; and

“Whereas over 85% of Ontarians are in favour of organ donation, yet only 30% of Ontarians are registered organ donors; and

“Whereas in 2006 the government of Ontario's Citizens Panel on Increasing Organ Donations recommended ‘improving awareness of the importance of organ donations, removing barriers to donation, improving how individuals can express their ... preferences and register their consent’; and

“Whereas in Ontario 21% of registered donors had their consent overturned by family members in the 2015-16 fiscal year;

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Change legislation to allow a donor system based on ‘presumed consent’ as set out in MPP Gélinas’s Bill 177, Peter Kormos Memorial Act (Trillium Gift of Life Network Amendment), 2017; and

“Establish an organ donation education policy framework and require boards to include education on the importance of organ donation in the curriculum of students before receiving their Ontario secondary school diploma.”

I fully support this petition and will affix my name to it.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. James J. Bradley: I have another petition from the people of Cambridge. I present it on behalf of the member for Cambridge, who is a minister and therefore, unable to present a petition. It reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I have here a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the rightful purpose of Ontario’s Environmental Protection Act (EPA) is to ‘provide for the protection and conservation of the natural environment.’ RSO 1990...;

“Whereas ‘all landfills will eventually release leachate to the surrounding environment and therefore all landfills will have some impact on the water quality of the local ecosystem.’—Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Health in Canada;

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

“That section 27 of the EPA should be reviewed and amended immediately to prohibit the establishment of new or expanded landfills at fractured bedrock sites and other hydrogeologically unsuitable locations within the province of Ontario.”

Mr. Speaker, this petition was presented to me by a great number of constituents in Oxford county. On their behalf, I want to present it to you and hope that you will enjoy receiving it as much as I enjoy giving it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The time for petitions has now expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING BETTER COMMUNITIES AND CONSERVING WATERSHEDS ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 VISANT À BÂTIR DE MEILLEURES COLLECTIVITÉS ET À PROTÉGER LES BASSINS HYDROGRAPHIQUES

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

Bill 139, An Act to enact the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal Act, 2017 and the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre Act, 2017 and to amend the Planning Act, the Conservation Authorities Act and various other Acts / Projet de loi 139, Loi édictant la Loi de 2017 sur le Tribunal d’appel de l’aménagement local et la Loi de 2017 sur le Centre d’assistance pour les appels en matière d’aménagement local et modifiant la Loi sur l’aménagement du territoire, la Loi sur les offices de protection de la nature et diverses autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the member from Lanark–Frontenac and two others.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Lennox and Addington. Don’t get the clock going until you’ve got the title right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. I’ll just refer to this as Bill 139, because if I read out the whole title, my 10 minutes on the debate on this would probably be up.

Although this bill covers a lot of territory, a lot of ground, I’m going to keep my comments to one schedule of it, the conservation authorities amendments, as well as just an overall discussion about this bill and the theme behind it.

First off, I’ll start out on the general premise, Speaker. Here is another example of a provincial government imposing and downloading obligations and conditions on our municipal partners without discussion, without

debate, without agreement or consensus. I really think it's absolutely atrocious that this government—or any government, really—would impose these sorts of conditions on our municipal partners.

1540

I think what this really shows, and what I've seen over the 10 years here, is that so much of our provincial statutes, so much of our legislation, is implemented by our municipal partners. So many of the acts passed in this Legislature are administered, implemented and managed by our municipal partners. This one is no different. But they never give our municipal partners any tools or mechanisms to actually pay for these conditions that the provincial government imposes.

The conservation authority is a good example. We know that our municipalities pay about 80% of the budgets of the conservation authorities. However, all the requirements are imposed by the provincial Legislature, and all the criteria are prescribed by the provincial Legislature. It is our municipalities who pay for them—the municipal ratepayer pays for them—but they are excluded or have very little influence in the actual implementation and delivery of those services.

I think it's far past time that this government realizes that our municipal partners are essential and key to the ability to provide distributed administration in this province, and treats them with the respect that they deserve.

I'll speak now about the Conservation Authorities Act changes here. Really, I believe that we are moving more and more closely to an unaccountable and arbitrary authority with our conservation authorities, with this bill. Let me give you a couple of examples.

Any decision by the conservation authority that an individual may feel is unfair or unjust, or not consistent with the legislation, can only be appealed to the same body that made the decision in the first place. So if an individual is not satisfied with a decision by the conservation authority, their only appeal mechanism is back to the conservation authority. There is no other tribunal or other court that they can seek a remedy from. That is a fundamental failure. That really speaks to an arbitrary authority on this.

It is also interesting that if a municipality has a disagreement with the conservation authority on budgetary processes or financing or a host of different things, who is the appeal body for the municipality? It's not the minister or the courts but the Mining and Lands Commissioner. Now, what competencies does the Mining and Lands Commissioner have over legal or statutory disputes between a municipality and a conservation authority? I think it's wholly unreasonable to have the Mining and Lands Commissioner as the appeal mechanism.

I also want to talk about how we are broadening out the scope of these conservation authorities with the powers to enter without warrant, and the obligation now, under this bill, that conservation authorities will have to employ and hire officers to enforce the provisions of this act.

Unlike for police or other peace officers, where there is an obligation that those officers have training, there is no training requirement in this bill. It says, "An authority may appoint officers for the purposes of ensuring compliance with the act..." There is nothing about providing training or qualifications.

If they do enter properties without a warrant, they don't even have to identify themselves. There's no requirement in the statute that the conservation authority enforcement branch has to identify themselves.

Of course, our police and peace officers have to identify themselves. Our police and peace officers have to have reasonable and probable grounds—that's a statutory requirement—before they enter properties under exigent circumstances without a warrant. There is no requirement to have reasonable and probable grounds. The conservation authority enforcement officer can enter. The only requirement under this act is "at any reasonable time," whatever that may be. But they don't need to have reasonable or probable grounds, and they can bring anybody along they choose as well.

I think that's a fundamental failure. I'd like to hear some arguments from the government benches today about why they are imposing this condition on our conservation authorities but not imposing any requirements for training, for reasonable and probable grounds, or for identification when somebody enters properties without a warrant. Again, we're talking about the Conservation Authorities Act. We're not talking about criminal behaviour here; we're talking about, in large part, somebody who wants to build a shed on their property or wants to repair some fallen trees on their shoreline, or whatever it may be. I find this absolutely astonishing, and I've heard no rationale presented on why this government is treating property owners with such a heavy hand under Bill 139 now.

Again, go back: If this government was being honest about protecting and finding a just and fair society, why is it that you cannot seek a judicial review on a decision by the conservation authority? For every other statutory obligation in the province, we generally provide that remedy of a judicial review. If somebody does not believe that they've been treated properly, or they have been treated unjustly, they go and have a judicial review. No. The only mechanism is an appeal back to the very same body that made the decision in the first place. That is approaching an Orwellian type of concept of justice, when one can only go back to the very same judge who made the decision in the first place and ask them to reconsider.

Judicial review, another remedy process, the Mining and Lands Commissioner for municipalities: These are all things, along with the heavy hand of entry without warrants, that I think need to be amended and need to be explained by the government.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. It's a pleasure to see you again in the chair, sir.

I listened intently to my friend from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. I did listen intently because he was raising some very serious concerns which made me think.

First, I will begin on this hand and say that I was on the conservation authority board in my region. I spent seven years there. I have great respect for those women and men who work for the conservation authorities across Ontario. I think they do fantastic work, but the member has raised some serious concerns about what's in this bill and what's going to be required. He's talking about the obligation to employ officers to police and represent the new act to ensure compliance with it; to enter property without a warrant, and they don't have to identify themselves, unlike police officers would have to do. It doesn't say anything here about reasonable and probable grounds. You don't need the warrants. It does say at a "reasonable time," he pointed out, which is a good thing, I guess. But why are they imposing the conditions but no requirement for the training for these officers to go and perform these new duties that they are going to have to do?

1550

I guess what he was saying, in between the lines, is that the bill is ill-considered; it was rushed. It was pushed through to this point without a great deal of thought about what's really in there. He did say, and I noticed you didn't call him on it, that if they were being honest—I guess in between the lines he was saying something else about the government—because of the judicial review, there is no requirement for that in there. He did say that Big Brother is watching, because he mentioned the Orwellian system of justice that's implied in this act.

So I thank the member for raising some of these points, because we must consider all of these things when we consider this bill.

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

Mr. James J. Bradley: I found the observations helpful to the bill, certain aspects of the bill.

There is always controversy over the ability to enter into property to do inspections, or to engage in enforcement. Certainly, the Ontario Landowners Association, to which the member belonged for a number of years, had expressed that concern to all governments that have been in power: that they did not want intrusion on to their property in what they felt were unacceptable circumstances.

The conservation authorities regulate development and other activities in, as you know, hazardous areas such as flood plains, to ensure these activities—and this can happen—do not put people and property at risk. It's important that the conservation authorities have adequate tools to enforce these regulations and protect people and property from floods and other water-related natural hazards.

The proposed enforcement framework, including entry powers for the purposes of determining compliance with these regulations, really reflects modern standards for

inspections and investigations, and is comparable to other pieces of provincial legislation in place to protect the environment. Examples would be the Invasive Species Act, Endangered Species Act, and for public safety, such as the Safe Drinking Water Act.

Now, most people in the province are going to be accepting of an inspection taking place. Many people do not like enforcement taking place on their property; I understand that. But the public good, in many cases, requires that the authority have the power to go in to, first of all, do the inspections, determine the extent of the problem and then to enforce the provisions that are in place. It's a balancing act, I recognize that, but it certainly is an essential tool that is required by the conservation authorities and asked for by them.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank my good friend from Frontenac-Lennox and Addington—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: —Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington for his comments.

I wanted to point out that I thought it was rather interesting. As he started, he talked about how over 80% of the costs of running the conservation authority comes from municipalities. He would be aware, and I'm sure most of the people in the House would be aware, that the municipalities invest this money and then appoint the board to manage the watershed on behalf of the residents of that municipality.

In this bill, they've now changed that. The criteria of what the knowledge, the occupation and the qualifications of the board members can be, that judgment can be made by the province. So, in fact, the municipality could appoint a board of all local councillors and the province could say, "No, no, no, I don't believe those councillors have the best interests of the watershed at heart, so we want you to appoint the Minister of the Environment"—or the former Minister of the Environment across from me here. "We want you to appoint him because he would be much better at water management."

If that's the authority the province wants, then they should include in there that, instead of the province paying 10% to 15% of the cost, the province should pay 90% of the cost. The municipalities would then be happy to let the province make the appointments of their choice. But they are going to be very disturbed when the people of that municipality decided that was the right person to look after their interests but the province doesn't believe that they're good enough to do the looking after of the conservation area and that province is going to make that decision. I think that's a real problem.

He also spoke about the appeal process and the fact that there was no appeal process. I believe the appeal process they're going to be allowed to use, the one under the OMB—it used to be the OMB but the OMB is no longer there because this bill gets rid of it. I don't know how they're going to do that.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to join the debate today. I appreciate the comments by our colleague the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. He raised some pretty interesting points that I had not considered.

My experience working with ERCA as a member of provincial Parliament is that they do good work, as referenced by our colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh. However, on a personal level, when I was building my house I had some ERCA considerations and requirements. I can recall not being able to be there for them to come and inspect the work that they required me to do, and that it was convenient for them to come when I wasn't there to do the inspection and then communicate through e-mail as to whether I was in compliance or not.

I'm not sure I'm on the same level—

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's about consent.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Well, whether it was consent or not, it was a requirement. I had to do the work, they had to inspect the work, and that's just how it went down. I obviously consented, but I didn't know when they came or what time they came; I just knew that they came and they inspected it.

I do, however, appreciate the member—I can understand, but I'm not sure I'm on the same level of caution around that, because there has to be some flexibility.

The member from Oxford raised a great point in terms of the province coming down and trying to impose their appointments on ERCA boards. You want that ability for the constituents within that region to be able to hold their elected officials who sit on those boards accountable, as the member from Windsor–Tecumseh alluded to. He sat on the board, and he had to explain some of the decisions that ERCA made to all the folks who were in the watershed.

I think that's something that the government should take a look at.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now back to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington for final comments.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I do appreciate the comments from the members from Essex, Windsor–Tecumseh, St. Catharines and Oxford. I think this is adding to the debate and the understanding of what's in the bill.

I could have added that they don't need to identify themselves, there's no requirement for training, there's no requirement for reasonable or probable grounds and there's no requirement for consent. Now, when people are consenting, you don't need statutory provisions because there's consent.

I do want to go back to the member from St. Catharines' comments that this is the new modern standard. That is somewhat evasive, because this is not the standard; this is a significant deviation. We do not permit our police officers to go unannounced into people's properties without reasonable or probable grounds in the apprehension of a criminal. But in the inspection of a

new shed or whatever, yes, we do. That is not a standard. It's certainly not a standard that I want to see be propagated where there are no safeguards put in place.

I believe that there are reasons when an enforcement officer would be required to go without warrant, but there should be those reasonable and probable grounds that something wrong is happening. There should be some requirement that the person is trained in matters of justice and the administration of justice, to safeguard the individual. There should be requirements that they identify themselves.

There are a whole host of things that are not standard in this bill. I would like to see the minister or someone from the government benches explain exactly why we're going to treat homeowners with such contempt and disregard as compared to criminals.

1600

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 139 today, the Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act. I'm happy to see that this bill aims to significantly alter the review process for local planning decisions in Ontario and will give municipalities more authority in that process.

The most significant change here is the replacement of the Ontario Municipal Board, or OMB, with local planning appeal tribunals. The OMB is an unelected and unaccountable body and has broad powers to make policy decisions. Also, OMB members do not need to have any professional credentials, despite being given so much authority. For these reasons, the bill's reforms are welcomed.

I think that's an important piece to highlight: Those who sit on the OMB, the members of the OMB, do not have to have any professional credentials, even though they are given so much power when it comes to decision-making. They don't have to have any knowledge of the things that they are going to be making decisions on.

The changes that are being proposed here are substantial, and while there are many aspects of this bill that are long overdue, there are just so many very important considerations to be taken into account.

These are long-overdue reforms. The Liberals have been promising change for close to 15 years on this—15 years of making promises, and 15 years of inaction on this particular issue.

Speaker, my main issue with this bill is something we've seen time and time again with the legislation that the Liberal government brings forward and introduces. There are good reforms included in here, but there is so much that we don't know. So much of the bill's substance is left up to regulation and the discretion of the minister.

Often, we talk about making change. We don't want to make change for the sake of making change, but sometimes it's necessary to make change. But we want to make sure that that change actually has some teeth, that there are some actions behind it and there's some accountability behind it.

When you leave things up to regulation or you leave things up to the whim of an individual—in this case, a minister—you may not find consistency in the work that’s being done. You could have a minister who is having a bad day and makes a certain decision that is difficult on a particular municipality. The next day, that minister could be having a great day and suddenly, another municipality, on that same issue, gets a different ruling. We can’t have inconsistency. There have to be teeth to any legislation that we bring forward. It can’t just be left up to regulation and the whim of the government or the minister of the day.

How do we know that it will be more responsive and effective? That goes back to having consistency, and to the legislation that we bring forward and pass here having teeth and having actionable actions that people can count on.

I’m also concerned about the timelines surrounding this legislation. We waited years and years for change on this file, but we don’t know if the reform of the Ontario Municipal Board will happen before the next election, which is in June of next year.

The Conservative government in 1996-97 made drastic cuts to funding for conservation authorities. Under the NDP in 1992, conservation authorities were receiving close to \$52.8 million. The Conservatives dropped that down to \$8 million. That is a huge cut to the funding for conservation authorities, going from \$52.8 million down to \$8 million. The conservation authorities will need more funding, not less, in order to fully implement their new responsibilities in this bill.

I want to speak specifically to how that impacts my riding, the riding of the member from Windsor–Tecumseh and the neighbouring riding of my colleague from Essex.

We all saw, played out in the news across the province, what happened just a few short weeks ago in our hometown of Windsor and in Essex county. For the second time in less than a year, Windsor residents experienced devastating flooding. That was two once-in-a-hundred-years weather incidents—flooding—in less than one year. They call them once-in-a-hundred-years incidents. We had two of those in less than one year.

Many people in my riding, in my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh’s riding and my colleague from Essex’s riding were still dealing with the damage caused from the flooding in the previous year. Many of those people had just begun to rebuild their basements. They had just begun to replace their furniture or their children’s belongings. Many of them lost family heirlooms and family pictures that will never be replaced. They were just starting to get beyond that and they were hit all over again by the flooding. They have lost everything again.

Unfortunately, extreme weather events like that are only going to become more common as a result of climate change. You only have to look to our region, Windsor–Essex, as a prime example that climate change is happening. We are going to see more and more

extreme weather events. It’s going to take a lot of funding to protect communities from future disasters related to climate change.

Again, I’ll go back to the flooding in Windsor and Essex county. Contrary to what the government side will tell you—either the minister has his head buried in the sand or he just refuses to acknowledge fact. He only has to come and talk to the residents in our three ridings to hear the truth, which is that many of our constituents no longer qualify for coverage under private insurance.

They will not qualify for the disaster relief funding from the government because not only did they get overland flooding—so it would have come in through doorways, through their foundation blocks, a number of ways—but it would have also come up through the drains in their basements, through the sewers. Because it came up through the sewers, the government is going to deny them funding to try to repair what was damaged.

Many of these private insurance companies are no longer offering private insurance to the residents of Windsor and Essex county. Many of the insurance companies have cut people off without people even knowing that they’ve been cut off. They turn to their insurance company for help, only for the insurance company to say, “No, you know what? We have identified your area as a risk and so we have pulled your insurance. You no longer have that insurance. You’re on your own.”

For any of those private insurance companies that will provide insurance to the people of Windsor and Essex county, often the cost for that insurance is beyond the reach of our residents. There were several low-income housing areas that were hit by this flood. They lost just about everything. They have no money to replace the food that was lost, their children’s clothing and belongings that were lost, their appliances that were lost, their furnaces and their water heaters that can no longer be used because you had standing water in the basement. A lot of that was sewage, so now you can’t use your furnace or your water heater because that would be put into the atmosphere in the rest of your home.

Many of these people couldn’t afford the premium on private insurance because our area has been hit twice. That is something that this government needs to address. They need to look at what is going on in these communities and make sure that, as they are giving additional responsibilities to municipalities, they provide the funding. When you’re putting additional responsibilities on our conservation authorities, you need to make sure there’s money to back up those responsibilities.

This bill proposes that municipalities consider climate change issues when developing their plans. But as I said, they can’t just consider it; they actually have to put money behind that. It would be impossible for municipalities to ensure that their conservation authorities are complying with the changes in this legislation without being supported with additional funding.

Since the government has not spelled out any additional funding for expanding conservation authority programs, are we left to assume that municipalities will be

left to pick up the tab? We see that. We see downloading. The Conservatives have done it. The Liberals have done it where they download to the municipalities and say, "It's your responsibility. It's your problem now. You figure out how you're going to take care of it financially." That is not fair.

Large cities aside—large cities like Toronto and the GTHA—what about smaller communities? There's no planning support in this bill for northern and rural communities that may lack the capacity and the resources to make planning decisions that could have a negative impact on their environment.

1610

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to speak for a couple of minutes on this bill in regard to the comments from the member from Windsor West.

One of the things it tells me, as we hear this debate—we have some differences, yes, but I think there's a lot of focus on climate change; there's a lot of focus on what I would call some disasters that we never experienced for a long time.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that even in my part of the province, we dealt with—my riding straddles the north shore of Lake Ontario and the south shore of Rice Lake. In the spring, the water was extremely high. It wiped out a number of beaches; for example, at Presqu'île park in Brighton. Cobourg has a beautiful beach right downtown, and they actually had to haul in some sand as the water receded a bit.

Part of this is to give some authority to conservation authorities to help them deal with these issues.

Just after the bill was introduced, I had the opportunity to meet with three conservation authorities that cover my riding, Speaker. I can tell you that although the legislation needed to be tweaked, they were delighted that we're moving forward. They were just delighted that we're going through this process, and they were, frankly, fairly happy with the direction the government has taken.

Speaker, the question was, how soon is this going to happen? Hopefully, if we can work together, we can get this done and implement it just as soon as we can.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to provide a couple of minutes of comment to the member's speech. It did remind me about our experience in eastern Ontario this year.

As the member opposite also mentioned for his riding, we had significant damage in many parts of Leeds–Grenville due to a variety of flooding issues, some associated with high water on the St. Lawrence. And the frustration—there has been a lot of talk in this Legislature about Windsor, and it reminded me that we wrote to the minister back in the summer because it was such a big issue, and it was acknowledged by the minister that our area was under review, but we still haven't got an answer on whether we were even going to be part of that

program. I hate to make the comparison to south of the border, but in New York state there is a different way that they're handling things. We had a big discussion with some of our local municipalities about no-wake zones, and about federal rules about the speed limit along the St. Lawrence. But the biggest challenge for homeowners was just getting information. Different municipalities handled things differently. Some were very proactive and had a lot of sandbags and a lot of resources available for their communities, and others didn't react as quickly. So I think we need to give our municipalities the tools to do the job.

In terms of conservation authorities, when I first got involved in municipal politics 35 years ago, flood protection was their major thing. They had that big role. Over time, their role has changed significantly, and in some cases they're not as responsive as they should be.

I'm glad she brought this up today, and I'm glad we're having this conversation.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The member from Windsor West did a great job in her 10 minutes. She reminded us that the Ontario Municipal Board members are not elected, yet they act like a judicial body. They throw out official plans and bring in their own, and that has led to their demise, especially after what they did in the Kitchener-Waterloo region. After 10 years of official plans, studies and public consultations, complying with every provincial rule and regulation, the OMB stepped in, threw them out and brought in their own rules. I think that that led to this bill being here today, because of the outrage that was sparked by that right across the province.

The member from Windsor West also reminded us, for example, that the NDP used to fund conservation authorities to the tune of \$52.8 million a year. The Harris government came in and cut that down to \$8 million—from \$52 to \$8 million to conservation authorities.

Mr. James J. Bradley: Shame.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: That is shameful. Of course, I shouldn't be surprised, since the same Harris government closed 28 hospitals, laid off 7,000 nurses and closed 8,000 hospital beds, and we're still paying the price for that.

The member from Windsor West also talked about flood plain areas in our parts of the province, and in yours and others, where we've had severe flooding. We're still waiting for the new climate change regulations. We're waiting for the disaster recovery assistance program to be updated to cover some of the repercussions from climate change, because right now, under the old guidelines written in the last century, ordinary citizens are being stuck with the impact of climate change. This government won't do anything about it, and they should be doing something about it because they are downloading that impact of climate change onto ordinary citizens when they've got the money to make the changes and they've got the power and the authority, and they should be doing it now.

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

Hon. David Zimmer: OMB reform is a huge issue in Willowdale. I agree with the member from Windsor–Tecumseh on his remarks about the OMB decision-makers, if you will.

What's important about this bill, and what I'm hearing about in Windsor, is the issue of the reform limiting the appeal process, which has been an area of great mischief—I'll put it that way. If the legislation is passed, there are going to be fewer decisions appealable to the tribunal. For example, new official plans and major official plan updates would be sheltered from appeal. In a lot of jurisdictions where the province approves a major planning document, that decision is not appealable.

Bill 139 proposes the same approach for official plans and official plan updates that are approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs. What that is going to do is, it will include conformity exercises. When municipalities align their plans with provincial policies like the growth plan, it's going to encourage the province, municipalities and the various stakeholders to work together at the front end of the process.

The net result of this, which is going to please people in Willowdale, is eliminating lengthy and costly de novo hearings. It's going to create the local planning appeal support centre to support citizens who want to participate in the appeal process. It's going to exempt major land use planning decisions like major official plan updates from appeal, and importantly, it's going to establish a mandatory case conference for those very complex hearings. Hopefully, that will lead to early settlements.

At the end of the day, we are limiting the ability of the OMB to interfere with the planning decisions of municipalities. That's a good thing for the people of Willowdale and Ontario.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'd like to thank all the members who stood and added their two minutes' worth to my comments today. I think what's key—we had the member from Leeds–Grenville get up and talk about some of the issues that they were having in his riding related to climate change. I'd like to mention to the member from Leeds–Grenville that I actually spent some time in his riding vacationing with family.

Mr. Steve Clark: You didn't call me.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My father-in-law is a Conservative; he would have loved to have coffee with you.

Hon. David Zimmer: What?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: There's one in every family, right? There's always one in every family.

My family spent some time in Gananoque. It's a beautiful area. We need to make sure that areas like that, areas like Windsor, out in Essex—you need to come down to the member from Essex's riding and spend some time in his area. They have a lot of great vacation areas and cottage areas there.

My colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh and I represent an area of Windsor with a beautiful waterfront.

In Windsor, there's lots and lots to do, so you should come down next year and spend some time with us. Hopefully, we won't be experiencing our third once-in-a-hundred-years flood within a two-year period. If we are, we'll put you to work.

1620

I think it's important to recognize that there are important changes in this bill. There's still work to be done on the bill, but there are important changes in this bill. When you are shifting responsibility to something like a conservation authority, when you're shifting responsibility to a municipality, you have to make sure that there are funds following that, so that when we're looking at addressing climate change, when we're addressing flooding issues and other things—the member from Essex gets tornadoes in his area—these municipalities and boards, like the conservation authority, have the funding to deal with it.

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

Mr. James J. Bradley: I'm going to concentrate on the aspect of the bill that relates to conservation authorities, because, as you may have heard, we have much controversy surrounding the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, a controversy to which the member for Welland made considerable reference during her speech. She had the luxury of a 20-minute speech. I am confined, because of the stage of the debate, to only 10 minutes, but I will try to encapsulate what I've heard from constituents who have contacted my constituency office and those of the member for Welland, the member for Niagara Falls and the member for Niagara West–Glanbrook.

First of all, what seemed to have happened is that the regional council that was elected this time had members who were determined to change the role and mandate of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority so that it would be more development-friendly.

The role and responsibility of a conservation authority, as most people would understand it, is to protect the environment and the natural heritage. That's the expectation, and the devotion of the employees to that has been well known over the years. But it was decided by some politicians that that wasn't the way it would be, and therefore, we saw new appointments to the board of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority and a change in what was happening.

First of all, we saw environmentally-inclined employees being fired out the door and replaced with those who, no doubt, are less inclined to be protective of the environment, though time will tell whether that is the case. That alarmed many of our constituents, who were contacting our office to say that, yes, there are economic development departments of municipalities that have a role, which implies that they should be promoting development—and there's nothing with that—but we count upon the conservation authority in our area to protect the environment and the natural heritage, and they were concerned that that would not be happening.

We also got complaints about the hiring practices. It seems that some of the senior people—this is the six-figure column, that they would be paid—who were hired for those positions did not go through a rigorous process. In other words, the conservation authority people who have informed me simply saw cronyism taking place. They saw people who were friends of regional councillors, who had the right connections, getting the high-paid jobs. Meanwhile, others who were doing the front-line work were fired out the door. Those kinds of complaints came to the member for Welland particularly, and to myself and to the other two members in the Niagara Peninsula.

That, of course, does not make for a healthy situation. We want the people who are most qualified. That is why you will see in the bill itself that there is a desire to see people with specific qualifications being on a conservation authority, rather than simply the friends of the people in power who make those appointments at the local level.

We were also informed of strange contracts that took place. Improper awarding of contracts was happening, people said to us, those of us who are local representatives, and they were looking for an audit that would look at that and other aspects of the operation of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority.

These are things that were brought to our attention and not something we initiated ourselves.

There were also allegations of questionable land deals. One that took place in Wainfleet seemed to be particularly strange in terms of the amount of money that was paid and the people who were involved and the connections to those people.

That's what happened. The member for Welland and I were getting the calls about that aspect of the operation of the conservation authority.

She will remember as well, as she sits across from me at the present time, that the previous regional council had expressed grave concern about that particular land deal, but when the new council took over, it seemed to give it the acquiescent nod.

There was also the desire for an audit. People were looking for an outside, independent audit. Finally, the board of the conservation authority acquiesced to that, but it was only after a lot of pressure. We would have hoped for an outside agency; it would have been nice if the provincial auditor had chosen to do that. Certainly, I would hope that the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario is at least watching the newspaper reports of what's happening, to see whether the authority is dealing with environmental issues as it should be.

We've had various municipal councils passing resolutions about the composition and the work of the authority in our area. This bill will solve some of those problems. It will give more power to the government to be able to set the mandate of the responsibilities of the authority. What has concerned members—and again, the member for Welland made extensive reference to this in her discussion in the Legislature—is the bullying that has

taken place. Anybody who seems to disagree with those in authority at the conservation authority—if they are critical at all, if they question some of the decisions that are made, there's bullying that goes on. It was even aimed at the member for Welland, who, when she raised this issue, received a lot of flak from people in powerful places. A scurrilous resolution was brought before council to get attention away from the conservation authority and bring vengeance against the member—who had nothing to do with it, by the way.

The mayor of Pelham, Dave Augustyn, has people after him now. He had been critical of the way the conservation authority was being run. So one of the councillor says, "Well, we're going to have an audit of your municipality." An operative from Niagara-on-the-Lake, a well-known Conservative, is initiating some kind of action in the town of Pelham. That's because the mayor dared to question those in authority at the conservation authority.

We had Kelly Edgar and a regional councillor from St. Catharines, Brian Heit, who were involved in a legal action, with a certain criticism taking place.

Ed Smith, who is an individual citizen out there, a concerned citizen, found that he was being attacked. He has had legal action taken against him. He criticized the authority, so now he is being sued by the authority for the criticism that he provided.

All of this is not good.

I would also say that another person I looked at is a well-known individual in the area. I noted when I made reference to him that you won't find a nicer individual than Bill Hodgson, who used to be the mayor of the town of Lincoln and is now a regional councillor from Lincoln. When I mentioned that in the House, the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook nodded in approval of the fact that I had characterized Mr. Hodgson in an appropriate fashion. Well, he, as a member of the board, was critical and wanted to see an independent audit taking place. So what happens? He gets bullied, he gets criticized and, unfortunately, he made a decision to withdraw from the board, to resign from the board.

You always like people on the front line, who are part of it, to be able to make those criticisms. This is why I was welcoming the legislation. The minister, when the issues arose around the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, said, "Watch for a bill to come in that will address some of these concerns." Whether it addresses them all, we will see.

Certainly, there are provisions within this legislation which give the province more authority to be able to deal with conservation authorities. We have some people in our area who refer to it as a "rogue" authority. I can't say whether they are right or wrong at this point in time but, certainly, the actions that have taken place are a matter of grave concern to citizens.

I can't believe the number of people, from a variety of fields, who have contacted me through the constituency office or, when I encounter them in public, are talking about the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority.

1630

The local newspaper, my local newspaper, the St. Catharines Standard, has done a very good job with their limited resources. As you know, now, local newspapers have very limited resources in terms of the number of staff they have to deal with these matters. It has dealt very extensively with the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority. I want to commend the reporters who have gone in depth to look at what is happening at the authority and have shared that with the public.

I wish I could speak about the other aspect of the bill, which deals with the OMB, because we know we need OMB reform very much. But because of the great attention being paid, appropriately, to the actions of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, I felt I should share these views with members of the House.

Again, I want to commend the member for Welland for her previous speech on this, where she, to a greater extent, was able to explain what is happening in our area and what may help to solve that.

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to rise today and offer some comments on the debate that we're having today. Clearly, it's unanimous around this House that there are concerns over the manner in which the Conservation Authorities Act has been addressed. We are all having frequent storms, and just I want to share something that was presented to both myself and Randy Pettapiece, the MPP for Perth-Wellington. It was presented by the Maitland Valley Conservation Authority. They represent the watershed in both of our ridings.

I'm going to quote from a document that they offered. It reads, "Our changing climate is resulting in severe and intense thunderstorms becoming the norm and not the exception." The fact is, on June 23 in our area, we had torrential rainfall. It just pummelled our area. The rainfall was forecasted as an incoming 40 millimetres. Unfortunately, our area received a range between 120 millimetres and 170 millimetres, which is almost seven inches of rain.

I want to be clear: We have to do better collectively—all ministries, not just the conservation authorities. This government has to get its act together because a concern of the Maitland Valley Conservation Authority was that there was no warning available from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry or Environment Canada for this amount of rain. The government failed Maitland Valley and the residents, particularly of Harriston and the people in Belmore, who were preparing to host a homecoming. If it wasn't for the dedicated employees of Maitland Valley Conservation—they were waking up every two hours to monitor the rainfall—there could have been much more damage. We have to clean up our act in this regard.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to thank the chief government whip for focusing on the NPCA. But I have some

more news hot off the press. As of 4:30 today, the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority continues to gut the workforce. They are now laying off eight front-line workers, perhaps nine: three in restoration, two planners, two ecological technicians and one event coordinator, as well as one vacant management position. They say that this is the work of the Niagara region and that they're going to give that work back, although the conservation authority has been doing that work for 10 years in Niagara.

The proponents, the activists, will say that in fact it is a way to get around the development piece so that the conservation mandate is to focus on conservation and the environment and the region's mandate is to promote economic development in the region.

The work that was at the NPCA under a memorandum of understanding for 10 years is now going back, so the employees will be notified at the end of the day today. What a tragedy for the Niagara region. These people are the people who review development proposals. They manage the watershed program and they issue the permits around development and around building.

We talked a bit about this the last time I was on my feet, about the workplace harassment that is going on here in the Niagara region—and I've got two seconds. I think the Ministry of Labour should be stepping in and appointing a supervisor to this workplace.

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

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'm really excited to join this debate. This is a bill that covers an issue that matters a lot to my constituents in Etobicoke Centre.

When I first got elected, some of the first meetings that I attended—in fact, even before I got elected I got involved, but certainly after I got elected, I attended a number of meetings surrounding proposed developments in my community. I represent a suburban community, but these applications in some cases were for significant intensification, beyond what local constituents thought was reasonable and appropriate for a range of reasons. In many cases, I agreed with them.

Some of the issues that were raised in those discussions were around the OMB. Local councillors complained that the municipality didn't have adequate control over zoning and planning decisions because too many decisions were being made at the OMB or could potentially be made at the OMB. They talked about how decisions of the OMB were overruling decisions being made by local planning authorities or by local councils.

The other thing that constituents raised with me was the fact that when they went out to challenge a decision—when constituents or when community groups wanted to go out and challenge and participate in the OMB appeal process, they really struggled. They couldn't afford to do it. It was long and time-consuming, and it really advantaged the developer in a way that forced communities to back away from what they thought was a reasonable position.

The replacement of the OMB with a Local Planning Appeal Tribunal is going to address those things. I think

that's really exciting news. It's going to replace the OMB with a true appeal panel, so it will only check whether the city is following its own official plan. It will give more control over land and zoning decisions back to the city. It will ensure faster, fairer, more affordable planning appeals. And it will establish a local appeal support centre to ensure that residents can more easily participate in the process without being experts and without having to hire reams of lawyers and consultants.

This will make a difference for people. It will make a difference for communities. I'm proud to support it.

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to join the debate today over the next 10 minutes—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Oh, a two-minute hit? I'm sorry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): That's all right.

Further questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: I know that the member for Huron–Bruce—that's what the plowing match does to you. When you have a plowing match in your riding, you just become so energized, and she's willing to speak once, twice, three times to the same bill. That's no problem.

I was particularly interested in the member for St. Catharines' comments. The issues around their conservation authority are well known across the province. And I listened very intently to the member for Welland last week.

I'm sort of disappointed that Conservation Ontario hasn't taken a bigger lead role in this. Because I've got three conservation authorities in my riding, I felt that Conservation Ontario would be a leader and would step in and try to provide some guidelines and some issues around the conservation authorities' operation.

As I said, I have three conservation authorities in my riding, and my relationship with the three of them is sometimes different. Sometimes they approach issues differently. Sometimes they're more aggressive in areas, and sometimes I want them to be more aggressive and they're more passive.

I do have someone who recently retired from one of my conservation authorities. I have mentioned it to the member for Welland. He has retired into the Niagara area, and I think he'd be exceptional to help put that conservation authority back on the right path.

I think there are people out there who can deal with difficult situations and who have the knowledge and the skill set to be able to deal with local councils and competing interests, but clearly, I think the minister and the government need to do something in Niagara. I applaud the member for St. Catharines for putting his concerns on the record.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now back to the member from St. Catharines for final comments.

Mr. James J. Bradley: I appreciate the comments from the member for Huron–Bruce, who reminds us that there are more frequent and more extreme incidents taking place that have to be addressed appropriately by a variety of ministries.

I also thank the member for Etobicoke Centre for dealing with the Ontario Municipal Board aspect of it.

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The member for Leeds–Grenville has been particularly helpful in this regard, talking about the experience in his particular part of the province and an individual—I won't reveal the name because I'm not authorized to do so, but he has suggested someone who has done an exceptionally good job down there, who could be helpful in Niagara in terms of straightening things out.

As for the member for Welland, she always has a bulletin for me—daily, it seems—on what's happening at the conservation authority. She is able to get that news quickly. Eight or nine front-line workers being laid off is not what we want. I didn't hear that the head of the conservation authority or any of the administration is being laid off. The top administration are all fine in their jobs, she says. It's the front-line people.

She also mentioned workplace harassment, which I didn't have a chance to get in to my particular speech. That is a matter of great concern, and that survey that was taken certainly identified that.

I think she, as I am, is afraid that if it changes and the authority is taken away, they'll put the fox in charge of the henhouse—that the people who want development regardless of whatever are going to be those who are going to be commenting upon the development proposals there.

I want to say, as well, that this really clearly points out why, despite the fact that they have limited resources, the St. Catharines Standard should have Grant LaFleche back writing a column instead of reporting—but he does a great job of reporting. There are days when I may be cursing at some of the columns that Grant writes, but that's exactly what is needed in our communities to deal with issues of this kind.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 139, An Act to enact the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal Act, 2017 and the Local Planning Appeal Support Centre Act, 2017 and to amend the Planning Act, the Conservation Authorities Act and various other Acts. It's quite a long title.

I was just meeting with a class of graduate students—from former MPP and cabinet minister and government House leader John Milloy—from Wilfrid Laurier. We had a very interesting chat about a number of different things, including the work of House officers, such as the whips—my counterpart from St. Catharines and my counterpart from Timiskaming–Cochrane—and the work that we do, and just in general how this House operates, or, more to the point, fails to operate, which sometimes I think would be a more appropriate way of putting it.

There are a lot of things going on in this new bill, not all of which I'm completely versed on. I may comment outside of the bill itself on a couple of things, because planning is complicated. There are so many forces at play today.

Back when my father was an MPP—

Mr. James J. Bradley: I remember him.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The member from St. Catharines, Mr. Bradley, remembers him. But he doesn't remember the early days. He remembers the middle and the later days, maybe, from 1977 on.

In the early days, boy, we lived in a different world when it came to planning. And we didn't always get it wrong. Perhaps with the growth in population and all of these other things that we're dealing with today, intensification and urbanization, there are a lot of challenges. But we didn't always get it wrong. We certainly were able to do things with a lot less advice, so to speak, from the various authorities or the depth of bureaucrats and people to try to stop you from doing anything.

We live in a world today where, in fact, there are thousands of people who are employed for the sole purpose of preventing you from doing anything. The reason for their job and the job that they do is to say no. And when you come back with a better reason: "No." Part of the thinking behind that is that if you have to answer those questions repeatedly, by the time you ever do get a yes, you have changed your plans in such a drastic way that they believe that you satisfy all of the objectors out there. You satisfy everyone that could possibly be opposed to the development that you're looking at. So you've considered all of those objections, you've said no a thousand times, and at the end of the day something does get built, but my goodness, it was a lot more expensive than it would have been otherwise.

I think about what it cost to build Madawaska Valley District High School, a school that I, believe it or not, graduated from—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, I actually graduated, I say to the member. It was opened in 1967. It was built by a company called Ball Brothers, and it was built for \$2 million, which was an astronomical amount of money in 1967, an astronomical amount of money. Today, we do minor renovations to a school such as, perhaps, retrofitting a school with air conditioning, in this situation we're dealing with today—well, it can't be done, obviously, that quickly, but there are few schools that you could put an air conditioning system in today for \$2 million. That school was built not air conditioned. We understand that.

A few years ago, they were able to retrofit it with air conditioning in the cafeteria-auditorium combination. But that's the only area, I believe, where the school has air conditioning. I've been there for various graduations, and thank goodness for that, because they're usually at the end of June when we're already into the heat spells. I'm there with a jacket and tie on, trying to look official, and just about dying. In the early days, before they had it—when I first was elected they still didn't have air

conditioning—I would think, "Oh, my goodness. How the heck are we going to get through this?"

Of course, the ability to do those things, just in general, in development—I think of the early days. The minister would know this stretch of highway very, very well, for example: Highway 62 from Bancroft to Belleville. We couldn't build that today. We couldn't build that highway today because of the amount of wetlands that it traverses and crosses, and we've got little culverts and stuff like that. That highway couldn't be built today. It wouldn't pass muster, as they say. Somebody would have stopped the project.

I dare say that, in today's day and age, we couldn't build the St. Lawrence Seaway, which was the most important economic project ever built for this country. I believe today that we wouldn't get the approvals to do the same St. Lawrence Seaway. That's the kind of cautious world we live in today. How different would the world be if we didn't have the St. Lawrence Seaway?

But I just want to talk a little bit about my own area. In my riding, in Renfrew county—I hear my friend from Leeds–Grenville talk about three conservation authorities; my friend from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, three conservation authorities; my friend from Huron–Bruce, three conservation authorities. Do you know how many conservation authorities I have in Renfrew county?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: How many?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have none.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: None?

Mr. John Yakabuski: None. I do not have a conservation authority. The county is the conservation authority. And while there might be some people who don't like that, the majority think it's just fine. We do not have a conservation authority that we have to be answerable to.

But one of the challenges, for example, in the government's view on Places to Grow is that they've got all this focus on intensification. Well, we all don't live in Toronto. You can barely walk down the street in Toronto in the middle of the day and feel the sunlight because it's blocked off by all kinds of new condominiums—50 storeys, 55 storeys—going up and down Yonge Street and every one of the major arteries there.

Where I come from, municipal politicians continually talk to me about Places to Grow, and they want to be able to develop some of the wonderful land that they have in their municipalities, particularly the ones that don't have a large urban area, or any urban area. They want to be able to develop that, and it's getting harder and harder to do that, but they can't generate the revenue that they need as a small municipality if they can't expand their tax base. Just staying the same doesn't cut it because all that means is you have to continually raise the taxes on the properties that exist. You can't do that. There's just no appetite for continually doing that. Yet still try to provide the additional services that people demand in the 21st century. They want more and more every day.

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My small municipalities don't have the ability to increase and grow their assessment by developing new

tracts of land: new subdivisions, new areas around some of the beautiful lakes that we have that are underdeveloped. They're being handcuffed by provincial regulations and policy statements that make it very, very difficult to develop any of that property.

Some of the new systems that we have to deal with sewage, for example—not sewage as in an urban sense, but septic systems. Today some of the septic systems we can develop and have available for properties are absolutely state-of-the-art and wonderfully protective of the environment. There's less reason to stop some of this development that some of my municipalities need. They're starving for revenue. The provincial government is continually choking them off, reducing the grants to them, reducing the municipal partnerships, downloading other costs, yet when they stand up and say, "We need the ability to increase our amount of assessments," they're stopped.

My goodness, it was only 10 minutes? I wanted to start talking about the bill. I wanted to talk about the bill now.

Anyway, Speaker, it looks like I'm out of time, but we've got to remember that small municipalities need to develop as well. Thank you.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to be on the record: I'm not anti-development in any way. I heard the member just speaking about the need for small municipalities to have some ability to develop, but the situation that we're talking about in Niagara is in an urban area of Niagara Falls. A huge—I think it's a 400-acre parcel of property that was actually sold to a Chinese development company, with 96 acres of wetlands. They really do not want to follow the provincial mandate, and they want to develop this property.

Now, the chief deputy whip spoke about those front-line workers who are going to be laid off at the NPCA and how no one in management has been laid off. That's correct, except that they actually had a mutual resignation of the director of the watershed program a week or two ago, but I'm sure that wasn't without severance, so that was one management position that went.

The interesting part is that we also saw their draft budget for 2018 last week, and there's no reduction in their draft budget overall, even though eight or nine front-line workers are going to be terminated, or laid off. But we saw an increase, actually, in the CAO and the administration side of the budget to the tune of almost \$800,000.

It looks like they intend to hire a bunch more managers. The ratio of managers to workers after these eight are laid off will be 1 to 1: There will be one manager for every one employee at the NPCA. Certainly we're very concerned about that, that there aren't going to be front-line workers available to actually do that much-needed work that these loyal employees have done for many, many years.

As I said, I think what we'll hear is that the reason for moving the work back won't be because it belongs to the

region; it will be because it's perhaps easier to get some things done.

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Northumberland—Quinte West.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Northumberland—Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: How can you forget, Speaker? How can you forget?

I was all prepared to make some comments on the member from Renfrew about the bill, but I can't, so I'm going to talk about some of the issues he brought up. I think it's appropriate.

He talked about the school in his own riding, that he—I think he graduated from it, he said, if I remember correctly.

We talked about air conditioning today and the kids who are suffering. Well, when my grandkids went to Spring Valley Public School in Brighton during a different government here, they didn't have to worry about the heat because there was lots of ventilation, because they had broken windows. As a grandpa who had some time, I went and helped some other parents put tape on the windows. So that wouldn't have been a problem.

He talked about Highway 62, which comes down to the 401 in Belleville—I'm quite familiar with it—and the St. Lawrence Seaway, and that because of the regulatory regime today, they might not exist. Speaker, he's probably right, and I agree with him on that piece.

But I would say he's suggesting that maybe we should scrap regulation. One of the other members said the other day that we shouldn't have any regulation—a free-for-all. I'm hopeful that's not what he meant.

Interjection.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I hope that's not what he meant.

Speaker, one of his comments about municipal downloading from this government—I think he's about a decade off, a decade and a half off. I was in municipal government during that era, and the member at that time who covered my area thought that municipal politicians were only tax collectors and they couldn't do anything. Speaker, I think he's just a bit off base, and we just want to bring him back to reality.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I appreciate the opportunity to add a few remarks today to the discussion on Bill 139.

I think perhaps this is going to be a bill that requires a great deal of review. When you look at the number of acts that are affected by it—things like the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal and then, in the same document, the Conservation Authorities Act, the Ontario Water Resources Act, the aggregate resources—there is going to be an important role for people as this bill makes its way through the legislative process.

Just in the minute that I have, I want to look at a couple of examples for people.

All of these acts have an impact directly on people and their property. If we have to find common things in this, that's where we begin. You look at some of the changes in municipalities and conservation authorities. These are direct government agencies whose regulatory body and regulatory framework impact on individual homeowners or property owners. I think that there's an effort being made by the government simply to bundle a great many things that need some thoughtful debate.

I look at the Ontario Heritage Act. That was a stand-alone bill that received a great deal of input by experts, and that was developed in the way in which it would serve the interests of residents.

One can look at any number of the bills that are in this bill that, in fact, spill over into so many parts of our lives.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It is always a challenge to follow, in this House, the comments made by the good member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

I guess I'll reveal my age a bit. I was living in Pembroke for three years, back in the early 1970s, when the member's father was the member from there. I was in broadcasting at that time, and I remember interviewing Mr. Yakabuski's father. I didn't know this Mr. Yakabuski, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, at that time, which was probably good. I probably might have had to bail him out of jail or something. Back in those days, I'm sure he was a wild character.

I was surprised to learn that he doesn't have a conservation authority in his beautiful riding, and it's one of the most beautiful areas of the province. It has got everything you can possibly imagine. I'm living in southern Ontario now, where our land is so flat and we don't have a lot of lakes. I mean, we've got a beautiful 100-mile peninsula around the lakes, but we don't have lakes that we can go to and take our families to, with campgrounds around the lakes and so on. In Pembroke and in that area, you have everything: Barry's Bay, Eganville. This member has got to be one of the proudest members here because of the beautiful small-town atmosphere that he can find in every nook and cranny of his riding, I have to say.

1700

I still have friends up there. Some of my friends run the Bulk Barn. I remember my old buddy, Donny; his dad was the jailer up next to Algonquin College, and that's why I mention the jail to my friend.

It is always a pleasure to follow him, Speaker. Thank you for your time this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now back to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for final comments.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you to the members from Welland, Northumberland–Quinte West, York–Simcoe and Windsor–Tecumseh for their comments.

I appreciate the history lesson of my friend from Windsor–Tecumseh.

I did want to comment to the member from Welland and make it clear, and I hope there is no misunder-

standing: We would never and I would never condone the development of anything that was damaging in an unacceptable way to the environment. But let's be clear: Whatever we do has an effect on the environment. Any development has an effect on the environment. You cannot do anything and not have some effect.

To the member from Northumberland–Quinte West: Anyone who really, genuinely believes that we need every regulatory roadblock to every project is also mistaken. We need good, strong regulations, but not every project should be expected to go through all of the same challenges, because for some of them it should be obvious that where it's being developed does not present the same kinds of problems that other areas do, as my friend from Welland is talking about the particular issue in Niagara Falls. Those areas where there is a clear problem should also be easier to identify. But we do, unfortunately, as I say to my friend from St. Catharines, live in a time where there are people whose only reason to exist is to stop anything from happening, and only when you get beyond them do you actually make some progress in trying to develop something.

We have a large population. It's going to get bigger. We cannot stop developing if we're going to provide housing for all of our people who will be here in the next 20 years. We have to continue to develop it. It is inevitable. We have to do it in the proper ways.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to join the debate. I'm pleased to listen to everyone today. It's one of those rare occasions where we're all teaching each other some new things. I wasn't aware that there was any jurisdiction in the province that didn't have a conservation authority. I was interested to hear about that and how that works for your communities in your riding.

I can tell you, we have a great conservation authority in Windsor, the Essex Region Conservation Authority. I'll give a shout-out to Tim Byrne, who has been one of the head honchos there for a long time as a conservation officer. He's well known in the area and is definitely an expert on our watershed and the flood plain. If you sit down and talk to him, he'll give you more information than you ever probably wanted to know about the nature of the flood plain in Essex county and development and how that has affected our region over time.

What he will also tell you is that, for a long time now in Essex county, the conservation authority has needed to upgrade their flood plain mapping, and they're looking at the provincial government to assist them in that. With the advent of higher-intensity rainfall and weather-related events, it has changed the landscape and it has changed where we used to think we could develop as opposed to where we will potentially not ever be able to develop, certainly in Essex county.

As I listened, I got the sense of really how complex and impactful this bill is and how development changes the landscape of our regions and our economies. I recently, just this past weekend, was at an event and was

asked to come into another event on a whim to act as a proxy for the mayor of Detroit. This was a leadership camp at the Gesstwood Camp in Essex. They had a leadership conference going on, and so the task was for the group to break out into groups and to put together a proposal as if they were the city of Windsor and the city of Detroit making a joint submission to Amazon.

We've all heard recently that Amazon is looking for a new location to develop a new mega warehouse. I think it's five million square feet of Amazon space, and that region will have to meet certain parameters for them to even consider it.

This group of young leaders of various professions—there were teachers, nurses, engineers and all walks of life in the group. They got up and gave me their submissions—again, I acted as if I were receiving it on behalf of the city of Windsor—as to why Amazon should accept Windsor's bid. Inevitably, the group spoke about the natural resources that we have in our community and in our region. They spoke about the fact that we have an amazing riverfront. In chatting with our colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh, we were talking about the nature of that riverfront. If you ever walked on Windsor's riverfront, it's about seven or eight kilometres of public land. There are no private developments allowed there. It was the foresight of leaders like Bert Weeks, the former mayor of Windsor, who saw that these were valuable assets to protect.

So when these young leaders were promoting the amenities of our region to Amazon, who was me at the time, they were talking about the riverfront. They said, "We have Lake Erie. It's amazing, an incredible fishery, with wonderful recreational water activities. We have Lake St. Clair, a beautiful lake, nice and calm and warm and clean"—

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, and great beaches and great parties all the time.

"We have Point Pelee, of course, an epic and wonderful, majestic natural resource—a gem in our community. We have the wineries. We have the most fertile soil on the planet. We have"—

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, the greatest wineries in Ontario and Canada, I would argue.

But it was the "we." They also talked about the fact that we had access to great public health care and public education and good roads.

So when I gave them some feedback at the end of all of their submissions, I asked them if they realized what they were actually talking about. They weren't talking about: "We have low development fees. We have low rates of taxation." They focused on what was a part of the collective, what we have built together. It gave them something to consider, because I think those are the most important components of our society, the things that we all build in the collective for our mutual benefit.

Those are the things that entice development. Those are what companies like Amazon are actually looking

for. If you look at their requirements under their submission or their proposals, they require functional and active bike lanes in any city that they might come close to. So those are things that, again, require proper planning, proper foresight and proper consultation with our communities.

That's why I'm happy to see that we're getting a little bit closer towards that direction under Bill 139, the Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act. For far too long, we've heard some serious concerns from municipalities when it comes to the constraints put on them by the OMB and also the heavy-handedness that the OMB has when interacting with municipalities and superseding their official plans. It's something that doesn't respect their jurisdiction and the knowledge of their own needs and their responsibilities to their constituents.

I welcome these changes. I am, of course, always concerned when I see a bill that leaves so much to regulation and is not exactly as prescriptive as we would want it to be.

1710

There are also changes to the Conservation Authorities Act that have been highlighted here today.

Earlier, in one of my two-minute hits, I talked about the need for the board of the conservation authority to be mainly elected, because those people should be responsive to their constituents at any given time, but certainly come election time, if they're not doing the right job. But then I heard of other stories where elected officials aren't doing things in the best interests. You may want representatives who are more well-versed in planning or environmental issues to be active participants or to sit on the board; you may want a hybrid of it.

It's interesting. This is a really important debate, and supremely interesting for me and insightful, because I'm learning about how this bill could potentially be made better. I think that if we're taking that approach in this House from all sides, we'll come out with a better bill. That's the intention. I think that's what our responsibility is, and that's what people expect us to do.

Speaker, my comments and my submissions on the bill are not so specific. I can't say with any degree of authority that I know what's right or what's wrong. But I certainly know that if we take this approach, and we're listening to each other and working out the fine details of this bill, we can get to a place where we can support economic growth and development growth in our communities, and we can do it in a way that highlights those natural resources, those natural aspects of our communities that are sought after by residents and by large corporations that understand that these have to be livable cities.

When we talk about these types of issues, I always hear that song: "paved paradise to put up a parking lot." Could you imagine? We've seen that happen. That's the cautionary tale, if we aren't diligent in our responsibilities here, and we don't put aside our partisanship and certainly put aside any motives.

We can get somewhere better. I see some of the mechanics of that in this bill. That's why I'm optimistic. That's why I certainly will be supportive of it. I love the tone of the debate. Again, it's nice to see this so early on in the session. I hope it continues.

With that, Speaker, I want to thank all of my colleagues in the House for their submissions, and I want to thank them for listening to mine.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? I recognize the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you, Speaker. Thanks for the chance to speak a second time on this.

I want to say something this time about the consultation process that led to the structure of these reforms. The consultation process began in the spring of 2016. It focused on the scope of the matters that the OMB should adjudicate, and broader questions of the board's effectiveness.

By the fall of 2016, we had released a consultation document that included a wide range of potential reforms. It was important that those potential reforms be put to the citizens of Ontario, and we did that through a consultation process. We received over 1,100 written consultations. We conducted 12 town hall meetings, strategically located around the province in different urban and town centres and rural settings. In those town halls, over 700 people participated in a meaningful way. Those town halls took place, for instance, in Ottawa, Newmarket, Clarington, Hamilton, Windsor, London, Guelph, Oakville, Sudbury, Toronto, Mississauga and Thunder Bay.

Essentially, the message we heard was that people wanted more community involvement in the decision-making process of the OMB. When you read through these reforms, you see that element of community involvement.

The community involvement is protected by limiting the jurisdiction of the OMB. There's no point in having community involvement and community input if the OMB is not going to take notice or pay attention to that community involvement and, in fact, consider that involvement or opinion in its decision-making process.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to congratulate the member for Essex for his very good comments on this piece of legislation.

I wish, Mr. Speaker, that this was two pieces of legislation, one dealing with conservation authorities, because I'm a great big supporter of conservation authorities in my riding and in my two counties, Simcoe county and Grey county.

I want to thank the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority, who came in to see me recently, and also the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority, which covers much of Simcoe county, or all of Simcoe county. They do this wonderful thing: For the second year in a row, they put elected officials and municipal directors of

the conservation authority on a school bus, and they took us around parts of our riding. You discover projects where they're doing watershed management; flood control; of course, mapping everywhere that it needs to be done; consultations with farmers and consultations with developers.

I've learned of all these neat little projects around my riding over the last two years that I had no idea about, including preserving the sand dunes in Wasaga Beach; making sure that we have good well-water throughout the riding; projects for access to clean water; reclamation of marsh areas; and preservation of marsh areas, which are the lungs of the planet. I just want to say what a great job they're doing.

They don't get a lot of funding from Queen's Park. They didn't get a lot of funding under our government. It was certainly cut, and they bring that to my attention. But it has not been restored in any way by this government. They still rely—most conservation authorities, or all of them—on ad hoc grants, whether they get them from the federal government or from the municipality or from the provincial government. Most of my tours involved them describing how they were able to do this project because of this federal grant, and they were able to do this project because of this provincial grant.

I think what isn't dealt with is basic, stable funding. It's not dealt with in this bill.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's always a pleasure to follow my good friend from Essex, one of the bright lights here in this Legislature, one of the young guns. He always comes prepared. He does his research and he knows of which he speaks.

He started speaking about our mutual friend Tim Byrne. I had to laugh. He was saying how long he has been at the conservation authority. I thought he was going to get into how he also is an Elvis tribute artist. I was waiting for that, so I thought I'd throw that out there, since you didn't.

The member for Essex, Mr. Natyshak, talked about the great conservation authority sites that we have throughout our region: all of the woodlots; the John R. Park Homestead he could have mentioned; and the hawk migration at Holiday Beach. We have the monarch butterflies that come through on their way to and from Point Pelee National Park, the smallest of our national parks. You know that well, Speaker, it being in Leamington, in your riding. We have Pelee Island. We have such a wonderful fishery in Kingsville. We have much to offer.

Thanks to Bert Weeks—and the member from Essex mentioned him—a former Windsor mayor, we have our wonderful waterfront of seven or eight kilometres of public land. Bert Weeks and Roy Battagello: saviours of that public parkland. Municipal elections were won and lost over the many years. Developers wanted to put up hotels, and those became election issues, but we saved our waterfront.

Our conservation authority is great at getting grants. The city or the county would put in a small percentage of the funding. The conservation authority would find all kinds of money to bolster those grants, to save our waterfront, protect our waterfront and protect our habitat.

I just can't say enough about it. I want to thank the member for Essex for bringing all of that forward this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from Northumberland–Quinte–West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: You got it.

Well, Speaker, a couple of comments to the speech from the member for Essex. I think he talked a lot in general, and he admitted that, but I think what I gathered from his speech is, obviously, they're supportive of where we're going—go to the committee and look at some refinements.

But I can tell you, Speaker, I had the privilege of attending a number of public consultations to do with the OMB's side, with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, as their PA. There was a lot of good input. One of the things, for example, that sticks to mind from citizens was that if they wanted to appeal something, it made it very, very difficult to go against a huge developer and, in some cases, even against the municipality. Although there were some supports from the ministry, they weren't very clear and we're trying to address that in this bill.

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I always like to use personal circumstances where you can touch, feel and see. When I was running for mayor of the new municipality of Brighton in 2000—I became the first mayor of the new municipality. Just prior to the election, one local developer had been fighting to develop a certain parcel of land that, frankly—I'm not a planner; I'm not an expert. But you didn't have to be a planner or an expert to know that that was not an appropriate thing. I remember a knock on my door as a candidate for mayor, an envelope, and there was a cheque in that envelope for my campaign. Well, I'm not very smart sometimes but, frankly, you can put two and two together. I opened it while he was there and it was a cheque—not huge but substantial, and I said, “Thanks, but no thanks.”

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Again, a great debate: I continue to listen and, lo and behold, I continue to learn. I learned from the member from Simcoe–Grey about his endearment to his local conservation authority, the great work they do and the importance that they be funded. That's something I raised. Our conservation authority would love some enhanced funding to upgrade their flood plain mapping. It's something that's important and something that I don't think development can happen without or, if you do, you do it at your own peril.

The Minister of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation: Thank you very much for your comments as well. I appreciate listening and learning and from you.

The member from Northumberland–Quinte West talked about the appeal process and how it was not only onerous but also sometimes people didn't feel as though it was in their best interest, and it's also a little bit discouraging. That's something that I hope the bill addresses.

Then the fact that someone could feel as though they could bribe their way into development: That's unfortunately something we have heard that happens. I certainly applaud the member's ethics in turning away that cheque and focusing on his responsibility as a candidate to do the right thing rather than something that's going to help him get elected.

The member from Windsor–Tecumseh: We have a mutual admiration for the place in which we live. I think we're all proud of the place where we live, but I'll tell you, Speaker, as I travel so much around the province, and really the country, as we have the opportunity to do, I'm more and more sure that the place which we share, Essex county—and you too, Speaker—is the best place on the planet to live by far.

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Speaker. I really appreciate your efforts this afternoon. I'm going to join the debate by picking up where the member from York–Simcoe left off.

She mentioned during her conversation a little bit ago this afternoon that many things need to be reviewed in thoughtful debate, because this is a significant bill that has come together. It affects many acts, and I'm concerned, because when we take a look at this and review it properly, there are so many questions that have been left unanswered. Once again, this government is introducing legislation without the proper research and planning, and it's a flag for me. That very point is a flag for me because it makes me remember last year's two environmental bills, Bill 172, the climate change act, and Bill 151, the Waste-Free Ontario Act, both of which, when they came into the House for second reading debate—it was a shoddy piece of work, to be quite frank. Both bills had left a lot of gaps. They weren't well-prepared. They seemingly were rushed. Therefore, it was left up to the people in committee to put up with a crazy amount of amendments. The Liberals literally were cleaning up their legislation in committee after they heard from a resounding number of stakeholders that they got both Bill 172 and Bill 151 wrong. They had to pull up their socks and clean up their act, and as a result, committee was stuck with working through a tremendous number of amendments. I share that with you in the hopes that this time the government got it right with Bill 139.

Another thing that is worrisome, from our perspective, is that in some cases they're making changes just for the sake of making changes. For instance, in 2017 they're changing the Ontario Municipal Board name. That particular name, Ontario Municipal Board, has been around since 1906. Changing the name will create confusion and imply that significant changes have been

made, when in reality much of the old bill remains intact and the same under the new name, LPAT—quite the acronym—the local appeal body tribunal. Unfortunately, again, we think the simple change in name will only lead to greater confusion.

Those are two things that I wanted to point out about this particular bill, Bill 139, but I too would like to comment on the impact it will have on conservation authorities. Speaker, I feel that we need to stand up and be heard. This is our opportunity. In the amazing riding of Huron–Bruce that I have the honour of representing, there are three conservation authorities: Ausable Bayfield in the south, Maitland Valley in the centre of my riding, and Saugeen to the north. Their role is very important in ensuring that our watersheds are protected not only now, but for generations to come.

I'm sure many in the Legislature know that the western boundary of my riding encompasses the largest portion of the Lake Huron shoreline, so I'm acutely aware of the importance that our natural environment plays and the need to be good stewards of our Great Lakes and watersheds. Many who live and visit in Huron–Bruce rely on the lake for a wide number of uses: recreational purposes, tourism, shipping, economic purposes—the list goes on. Our conservation authorities ensure that we can continue to enjoy these resources safely.

While we support all efforts to increase transparency and accountability, including publishing meeting notices and ensuring meetings are open to the public, we still have significant concerns.

First, this bill will give the minister the right to set regulations regarding the qualifications of conservation authority board members. This is yet another flag that was reminiscent of past legislation—specifically, Bill 172—where it was going to be left solely in the hands of the environment minister to appoint directors. Well, *déjà vu*, Groundhog Day, here we go again: Another piece of legislation, another way that this government is trying to impress itself and impose a nanny state.

Anyone who knows conservation authorities well knows that local people are appointed to these boards through participating municipalities. The best decisions are made by the people who are closest to the issue, and that's also the case with regard to managing our watersheds.

By instituting that the minister will have the right to set qualifications for board members for conservation authorities, is the minister suggesting that our municipal governments are unqualified to make these judgment calls? If so, I'd like to remind him that many members in this very House, including himself and several members of his party, served on municipal councils prior to their careers in provincial politics, and they themselves would have been vested with the responsibility of filling appointments to the conservation authority. Is the minister suggesting that he and his colleagues were unqualified to make these decisions when in municipal office, or now that they are in provincial politics, they are suddenly qualified because they know all?

1730

Speaker, we certainly know that over the last 13 or 14 years, this government has not made good decisions. This government has gotten off the rails and, as a result, municipalities have lost autonomy, and here they are losing control of who sits on conservation authorities as well. It's a flag that in rural Ontario we need to stand up and say that we don't agree with this, that we can do better. We owe it to our communities.

Cookie-cutter approaches developed in Toronto do not work for the municipalities that Maitland Valley Conservation Authority is responsible for in terms of the location of their particular watershed. I can say the same for Ausable Bayfield and Saugeen. We've got great municipal representation making decisions based on local priorities and local input, and it has to stay as such.

I have to share with you that my colleague and neighbour, the good member—the great member—from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, said it best with his recent remarks: The bulk of funds to operate our conservation authorities are derived from the local level, so if you're going to have a say at the local level, you should put a little bit of money into it, and that's reasonable. But then you should have the ability to appoint those members. Again, just to paraphrase what the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound's meaning was: If we are going to put up local municipal dollars, then they should, for goodness' sake, have the ability to appoint board members to their conservation authorities as well.

But this government, you have to watch them, Speaker, because as I say that, I can't help but think of some of the headlines that I'm seeing last week and this week in my local news. People are just learning—it's a little sidebar here, Speaker, but it's the same concern. People around Huron–Bruce are just learning that local county health units may be removed from that domain and slid into the domain of our local health integration networks. And who is going to pay for it? If this province still expects the county to put up money for health units, for goodness' sake, they should have a say in who's appointed, they should have a say in terms of priorities, and they should have a good return for their money.

Here's another example of the provincial Liberal government taking local tax dollars away from municipalities and using them elsewhere. In the case of health units, they're probably just going to assume that counties are going to put money forward towards the LHINs, or, in the case of conservation authorities, the local municipalities will have to foot the bill for provincially appointed people. That doesn't make any sense.

We have to stand up and say that this particular bill needs that thoughtful debate that the member from York–Simcoe suggested moments ago. We need to stand up for our municipalities. They have lost enough autonomy under this Liberal government over the last 14 years and we have to make sure we have the right people in the right place making decisions for our watersheds.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Indeed, it is a pleasure to follow the passionate member from Huron–Bruce. She was talking about the credentials of future members of our conservation authorities. When I had a briefing with the minister's office on this bill, I raised that very point. As I've said several times in the House, I served on a conservation authority, and all of our members were appointed by our municipal councils. My first term, all but one was a councillor. In that case, a former deputy mayor of Amherstburg, who was a lawyer, was appointed and he happened to be chair. It was his turn to be chair and he didn't run again. They brought him back and let him be chair and so on. But every other member during my seven years was an elected member of council from our municipalities in Windsor and Essex county.

So when I had the briefing and I read the guidelines and I looked at the act and it said that the conservation authority should be—the directors on the board should have some kind of expertise. They should come from a science background or an environmental background and have an expertise in the areas that the conservation authorities were actually making regulations on and actually policing and enforcing on. I said, "But wait a minute. These are non-elected people who would not be having to answer to the taxpayer."

When conservation authority boards set their budget, that's it. It's like the local health unit. That's it. City council can't change it. Once that budget is set, council can't overrule that. If you have people on there making decisions who don't have to answer to the taxpayer, that's going to cause conflict amongst the funding partners of the conservation authority.

I thank the member for Huron–Bruce for bringing that up, because this bill needs more thought. Something has to change there. Either expand the board and have a group that doesn't necessarily have a vote on the budget but something, but don't just say that they're going to come in, they have their expertise, yet they don't have to answer to the taxpayer.

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

Hon. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's a pleasure to rise in the House this afternoon on this very important bill, Bill 139, the Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act. I was listening very carefully to the member from Huron–Bruce, who spoke to both aspects of the bill: reforming the land use appeals in the province as well as the conservation act.

With all due respect to the member from Huron–Bruce, I think the only confusion that arises in land use planning appeals in the province of Ontario now is the legitimate confusion by members of the public who think that their local official plans and local zoning bylaws, which are determined by their elected representatives—they think that's the actual law of the land for planning. But as we know, it's not. The Ontario Municipal Board can and often does completely overrule the democratic decision-making process at the local level.

There needs to continue to be a mechanism to appeal local decisions if they're wrong or if they're bad or if

there's just a legitimate disagreement about them. What this proposes with the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal is to have a true appeal tribunal that does not revisit and become an alternate decision-maker but determines whether the right decision was made in the first case, and if not, can send it back to the municipality, potentially, for another review.

On the issue of conservation authorities: I served for 14 years on the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. We had a mixed board of elected representatives and citizen or lay appointees. I think the proposed regulations in this bill would be good guidance for local councils if they want to appoint lay appointees.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank my colleague from Huron–Bruce for her excellent comments. She knows of what she speaks, Mr. Speaker.

I thought, when the Minister of the Environment got up because he thought it was a bit amusing when the member from Huron–Bruce said that there has been an incredible loss of autonomy for municipalities under this government—and I can only think of his own Green Energy Act, something that he's responsible for on the government's side: 100% loss of autonomy for municipalities; no longer able to tell you whether you can put a windmill here or a windmill there or a solar farm here or a solar farm there. They can tell you where to put the shed on your property; they can tell you how to site your house—complete authority over all that. But the Green Energy Act took away 100% of their authority to do proper planning.

Certainly in the case of my riding, I'm going to say, "Thank God for the Environmental Review Tribunal," which finally overturned the decision of the government to allow 500-foot wind turbines, 50-storey wind turbines, next to Collingwood Regional Airport—sandwiched, actually, between the Collingwood Regional Airport and the Stayner aerodrome.

We agree in this piece of legislation that the OMB does need to be reformed, but as was said by the NDP member who did a two-minute hit, certainly this bill needs to go to committee. As I read our eight-page briefing note, which is pretty long for a briefing note, it's riddled with all kinds of contradictions for, really, both sides on the OMB debate. The developers aren't happy. Citizens' groups aren't happy. Lawyers who deal with the OMB aren't happy. I didn't know if you could write a piece of legislation that made so many people unhappy, but congratulations, you've done just that.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: I thank the member for Huron–Bruce for pointing out some of the failings in the bill, and certainly the member from Windsor–Tecumseh as well.

Particular to the appointment process, I've been up talking about my Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority and the appointment problem there. There have

been a number of ideas floated. I know the mayor of Welland actually proposed that the lower-tier municipalities, where we have lower tiers, take back that responsibility to appoint their own people, as opposed to the upper-tier municipality having full authority over that that may be used in some partisan way.

I've put forward a private member's bill that would see at least half of the members appointed having some experience around conservation, the environment and those kinds of issues, so that there's a balance of expertise on the board. I get that municipalities actually provide most of the funding—I think it's 60% or 65% in a lot of cases. A very small amount, only 4%, actually comes from the province to my conservation authority. There does need to be a balance.

I went to the technical briefing that the member from Windsor–Tecumseh hosted. I did speak to the ministry staff about perhaps appointing a supervisor, so that when there is a problem and there's no authoritative body that oversees conservation authorities, the minister could actually appoint a supervisor in those rare situations, like they do in hospitals, on school boards and in other bodies that the government funds. That might be an option, as well, that perhaps could get some weight when we get into committee, so we're not kind of stepping on the ones that work.

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

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Oh, forgive me. Yes. It's back to the member from Huron–Bruce for final comments.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Speaker. I certainly appreciate the comments that we heard from the members from Welland and Simcoe–Grey, the Minister of Housing and the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, because altogether, the ideal here in this House is that we share perspectives and share experiences, so that we can be better for the residents of Ontario.

But it just slays me when once in a while we get peppered with comments from the other side that are absolutely speared by arrogance. It's with all due respect that I say back to the Minister of Housing, who said that what they're proposing is a true appeal tribunal—Speaker, I have to share with you that across this province, after the debacle with the Environmental Review Tribunal, where maybe once in the history of industrial wind turbines they got it right, they're a joke across the province. Nobody trusts or believes what is intended through a Liberal tribunal.

We have to get this right. In order to get it right, I reflect on a local example of development in the community that I live just outside of: Gay Lea Foods came forward and announced a huge investment in their food processing plant in Teeswater, Ontario, but it was only after local municipal officials—who knew what the issues were, who went to bat for the local business and who went to bat for local employees—came forward and

proved that the conservation authority was using outdated flood plain mapping that they finally got it right. Because resources have been cut back so much, as we have heard before, the conservation authority was forced to use flood mapping that dated back to the 1970s. They were using that flood mapping to make a decision on an expansion of a business in 2017. That doesn't make any sense, and thank goodness we had local municipal officials making a difference.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke on a point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm just curious that a bill of this magnitude—it's one of the thicker bills that we've been debating in this Parliament. It's quite substantial, with a lot of changes to a lot of different acts. Does the government have no interest in debating this whatsoever? I mean, we've got members on the government side. I would hope that—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Unfortunately, that is not a point of order.

So I will continue now with—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, I apologize, then.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Apology accepted.

I will now continue with further debate.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm pleased to rise and stand to speak to Bill 139, the Building Better Communities and Conserving Watersheds Act, 2017. I'll first start off by thanking the work of our critic the member for Woodstock—

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Oxford.

Mr. Michael Harris: I say Woodstock because that's where I know it best—of course Oxford and his staff for a very extensive, thorough look at this particular bill.

As we've said all along, we want to see a system that, in fact, respects the authority of municipalities and the input of local community groups without adding additional delays and red tape for well-planned developments. It's clear that there were stakeholders who raised concerns—from environmental groups, the legal community that works with the OMB to home builders—that this bill has really, frankly, missed the mark. Numerous groups have raised concerns that these changes will lead to more cases, in fact, going to court, making the process more expensive and less accessible to concerned groups and citizens.

I need to raise that the OMB has been around for quite some time, and it's not without some controversy. I know locally in the region of Waterloo, there was some recent discussion, back and forth, as early as 2015, when the region and developers came to an agreement about a particular development in the north part of the city, to “eventually open up 455 hectares of land for new developments, a benchmark that is over five times the region's original target”—I'm just reading an article from the CBC.

Initially, “the region wanted to set aside for development land that was a little less than a kilometre wide by a

kilometre long, if you think about driving that distance in your car. That's in addition to the 35 square kilometres the region says was already available for development....

"But developers in the case, led by the consortium that includes Activa Holdings"—and others. "They appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board, an arm's-length judicial body that adjudicates disputes over planning in the province, to increase the amount of land available for developments to about 1,053 hectares, about 10 square kilometres."

They went back and forth, of course, and I believe the proceedings are all wrapped up, but the region and the developers came to an agreement.

I think the number one thing I hear often from families, especially in the community that I represent—of course, we're seeing a lot of growth in the region of Waterloo. Families look to the region as an ideal place to raise a family, and I wouldn't blame them one bit for doing so. I raised my family there. I was born and raised on a family farm. I moved to Kitchener, and the suburbia part of Kitchener south, the corner of Kitchener I represent, reminded me a lot of home, to some degree. You could see the corn fields—and you still can; often, I see tractors going down the road, which is kind of unique in the city still. But it allowed for those amenities—big, urban city amenities—still in Kitchener-Waterloo.

Affordability is by far the number one concern that I hear from families that want to enter into the housing market. They're not all wanting to raise a family in the downtown core. They want to have a yard. My kids love jumping on the trampoline in the back, on the swings. They need affordability. One of the biggest things we have to have is that affordability factor, so there has to be a balance.

1750

I was just looking, actually, at development charges. I've met with folks recently, and we went back as far as 10, 15 years ago and the significant cost increase of development charges today. Look, we all expect more infrastructure to be included and added when new developments come online, but just in the city of Kitchener alone when you're looking at residential developments, a single detached or a semi-detached dwelling, it's about \$5,618 per dwelling or unit. That's a full-service suburban area. That, of course, is significant, and those costs will continue to increase. That simply is added to the bottom line. It's not just the development charges; you think about the land to acquire, building materials, labour costs—it's difficult for a family—

Mr. John Yakabuski: The whole idea of home ownership is out of reach.

Mr. Michael Harris: Exactly. My colleague is talking about the inability for families to afford and own an actual home of their own. I was lucky to get into real estate perhaps at a young age, and I'm happy for that, but new families with young children have a very difficult time, frankly, getting into the housing market.

There is a variety of different stakeholders that are interested in this particular bill. In the region of

Waterloo, we have a very active homebuilder community, the Waterloo Region Home Builders' Association. I look forward to attending their events every year, recognizing the great work that their members do in our community—very generous, of course.

I have to highlight the Ontario Home Builders' Association. When they last met, they forwarded some resolutions. Actually, I think their annual general meeting is happening this weekend. They're electing a new president. I know that the new president comes from the Ottawa area. I know our colleague from Ottawa was in attendance when that happened.

But I want to just quickly read into the record a resolution that was brought forward by the Ontario Home Builders' Association:

"Whereas the provincial government has commenced a review of the scope and effectiveness of the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB), which is an important part of the province's land use planning system"—now, this was back in September 2016. They go on:

"Whereas the OMB review comes only months after a number of significant changes to the land use planning and appeals system have taken effect through the Smart Growth for Our Communities Act, and the government is proposing additional significant changes to land use planning through the coordinated review; and

"Whereas OHBA strongly supports the role of the OMB as an impartial, evidence-based administrative tribunal that is responsible for handling appeals of land use planning disputes. In this administrative authority, the OMB serves to ensure that provincial land use policies and objectives are achieved and that municipalities employ consistency in the application and implementation of the Planning Act, the Development Charges Act, the provincial policy statement and other related land use legislation; and

"Whereas the decisions made by the OMB are based on planning evidence, provided by expert witnesses under oath, which ensures that long-term public policy objectives, rather than short-term local political calculations, are upheld. Without an independent tribunal that specializes in planning law, such as the OMB, it would be more difficult to achieve provincial and municipal policy goals; and

"Whereas the OMB supports the public good because its decisions can be important counterbalance to the local political pressures of municipal councils. The local interest is not always the public interest. The OMB provides a forum where the principles of fairness, quality, consistency, administrative justice and transparency are fundamental and where the application is judged in conformity with public policy; and

"Therefore be it resolved that the OHBA recognizes that the province wants more planning decisions resolved at the municipal level. Therefore, ensuring the municipal public policy and regulation are in conformity with the provincial policy is paramount. Modernizing municipal zoning to be in conformity with provincial policy would allow the planning process to be significantly more

efficient, predictable and result in fewer appeals. The province should take a more proactive role to ensure municipal zoning is updated; and

“Therefore be it further resolved that OHBA supports having professional planners work as case management workers to pre-screen appeal applications. A mandatory review through a case management worker would assist to quickly determine if there are appropriate planning grounds to proceed with mediation, hearing or dismissal. Furthermore, as part of any mediation process, the board should have the authority to assign recognized ratepayer associations/groups with a resource with professional planning experience and perhaps more preferably a registered professional planner with mediation training and certification. This would encourage greater public participation as groups would have equitable access to trained professionals whose role and purpose is to understand and resolve conflict. Such resources should be funded by the board; and

“Therefore be it further resolved that: the province should implement a pre-hearing requirement of manda-

tory mediation for applications in order to provide a forum of principled dispute resolution and aid in the facilitation of decision-making at a pre-hearing level, thereby reducing the number of full hearings or the scope of hearings before the board.”

I do want to reiterate that this was a resolution passed back in September of 2016 by the Ontario Home Builders’ Association land development committee, as it pertains to this particular bill. I think those comments—oh, I’m out of time, it appears.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): In accordance with our parliamentary procedure, there isn’t enough time to start and end questions and comments this afternoon. We will pick that up when this bill is debated next time.

Therefore, this House stands adjourned until 9 o’clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1756.

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Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Seniors Affairs / Ministre des Affaires des personnes âgées
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Des Rosiers, Nathalie (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	
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	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
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 Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des 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 Minister Responsible for Small Business / Ministre responsable des Petites Entreprises
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs Minister Responsible for Accessibility / Ministre responsable de l'Accessibilité
MacLaren, Jack (IND)	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 de l'Action pour un 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, Hon. / L'hon. Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Housing / Ministre du Logement Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton–Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research, Innovation and Science / Ministre de la Recherche, de l'Innovation et des Sciences
Munro, Julia (PC) Naidoo-Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	York–Simcoe Halton	Minister of the Status of Women / Ministre de la condition féminine Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care / Ministre responsable de la Petite enfance et de la Garde d'enfants
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Attorney General / Procureur général Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP) Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Essex Chatham–Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint de parti reconnu
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Hon. / L'hon. Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation
Vacant	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Michael Mantha
Mike Colle, Nathalie Des Rosiers
Cheri DiNovo, Michael Harris
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Michael Mantha, Arthur Potts
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Présidente: Ann Hoggarth
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Han Dong
Yvan Baker, Toby Barrett
Mike Colle, Han Dong
Victor Fedeli, Ann Hoggarth
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Granville Anderson
Granville Anderson, Yvan Baker
Grant Crack, John Fraser
Lisa Gretzky, Julia Munro
Lou Rinaldi, Lisa M. Thompson
Soo Wong
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
Granville Anderson, Lorenzo Berardinetti
James J. Bradley, Wayne Gates
Cristina Martins, Sam Oosterhoff
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Nathalie Des Rosiers
Amrit Mangat, Jim McDonell
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Ross Romano, Monique Taylor
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-présidente: Laurie Scott
Robert Bailey, James J. Bradley
Joe Dickson, Sophie Kiwala
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Monte McNaughton, Laurie Scott
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bob Delaney, Vic Dhillon
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Randy Hillier, Monte Kwinter
Lisa MacLeod
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Ted McMeekin
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lou Rinaldi
Granville Anderson, James J. Bradley
Grant Crack, Jennifer K. French
Jack MacLaren, Ted McMeekin
Lou Rinaldi, Mario Sergio
Daiene Vernile, Bill Walker
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
Lorne Coe, Bob Delaney
Vic Dhillon, Joe Dickson
Harinder Malhi, Gila Martow
Ted McMeekin, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley