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Jeudi
22 février 2018

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 22 February 2018

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 22 février 2018

The House met at 0900.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

NOTICE OF REASONED AMENDMENT

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 71(b), the member for Nepean–Carleton has notified the Clerk of her intention to file notice of a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 196, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018. The order for second reading of Bill 196 may therefore not be called today.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MINIMUM WAGE

Hon. Harinder Malhi: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognize that not all Ontarians are feeling the benefits of our growing economy, and that we endorse a \$15 minimum wage for workers starting in January 2019 to help create more fairness and opportunity across the province.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Ms. Malhi has moved government motion 61.

I return to the minister.

Hon. Harinder Malhi: Our economy is doing very well. We are leading the G7 in economic growth and we've created almost 800,000 jobs—

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, this motion should be ruled out of order. Under standing order 52, and I will quote: "No motion, or amendment, the subject-matter of which has been decided upon, can be again proposed during the same session." Everything that is in that motion has been dealt with in Bill 148. Bill 148 has been passed by this Legislature. It is law.

Under the standing orders—and for very good reason, because we are supposed to be spending our time in this Legislature in a productive fashion, not rehashing the debate that has already taken place and has been decided upon. The government has voted in favour of Bill 148. The Legislature has voted in favour of Bill 148. It has passed. It is law.

This debate, which deals completely on the content that has been decided upon in Bill 148—there is nothing inside of this motion that is outside of the strength and the authority of Bill 148. Dare I submit to you, respectfully, that this motion is out of order?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I'm going to seek other members, if they want to speak to your point of order. Are there any?

During the House's consideration of Bill 148, it was asked to approve a number of amendments to labour legislation. At no time during the session was this House presented with a singular question regarding minimum wage. This is a different question before the House. I therefore find the motion does not offend standing order 52, and the motion is in order.

I return to the minister.

Hon. Harinder Malhi: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I was saying, our economy is doing very well. We are leading the G7 in economic growth. We have created almost 800,000 jobs since the recession and our unemployment rate has been below the national average for 34 months. But we know that not everyone is feeling the benefits of that prosperity. Over the past number of years, I have spoken with many of my constituents in my riding of Brampton–Springdale about how the nature of their work has changed. They are working so hard to put food on their table, take care of their children and pay their bills, but are finding that money runs out before the month ends.

That isn't right. Those who are earning minimum wage shouldn't have to worry about making ends meet. While the party opposite doesn't agree with this, I strongly believe that everyone who works for 35 or 40 hours a week deserves to earn a decent wage. They shouldn't have to struggle to get by.

It's disappointing that the party opposite doesn't agree. Despite the economy doing so well, they still don't think it is the time to raise the minimum wage. They believe that it is too soon. They believe that \$15 is too much. They want families of Ontario and families in my riding of Brampton–Springdale to wait even longer, although they won't say for how long. I cannot disagree with this more. The families in Brampton–Springdale cannot afford to wait.

A delay in raising the minimum wage to \$15 is a denial. Rolling back the increase to the minimum wage will take money away from minimum wage workers. This is money that they rely on for food, rent and day-to-day expenses. This is why I am so proud that our government is committed to raising the minimum wage

to \$15 an hour on January 1, 2019. We are standing up for workers, we are making changes that will protect and support them, and we will not back down from that commitment.

There are a number of reasons. I know, over the last little while, we've had opportunities to meet with our constituents to hold all sorts of consultations. I actually travelled with Bill 148 when we talked about minimum wage. It's important to Ontarians. It's important to our economy, to our students and to everybody across the province. We want to ensure that everybody has a fair chance and everybody is able to put food on the table for their children and for their families, and that they are able to live a good style of living. We have taken on an approach to affordable living in Ontario which has many prongs to it, whether it be free tuition, free pharmacare, and minimum wage. We have taken an opportunity to do this.

Before I continue, I do want to let you know that I'll be sharing my time with the member for Kingston and the Islands.

When people say that increasing the minimum wage will reduce employment, that's not true. As the minimum wage rises, workers become more attracted and labour turnover rates and absenteeism tend to decline. These people are taking this money and spending it back in our economy, which is going to strengthen our economy and build a better Ontario, a stronger Ontario, and one where people have an equal opportunity to be able to afford the things they need. These people are going to go out and buy their kids that new pair of shoes, or put food on the table for them. This isn't money that they are putting away or storing. When they are making \$14 to \$15 an hour, this is money that they need for their day-to-day expenses. This is the money that they need to make ends meet so they don't feel at the end of the month that they don't know where their next meal is coming from.

We want to give Ontarians an opportunity for a good life. We want to make sure that every child has breakfast on the table before they go off to school. It's important to us that we continue to work on this. It's important to us that we support Ontarians and we listen to them. We've taken the time to do this. It's not too soon. It's the right thing to do, and this is the right time to do it. We're in this together.

0910

We are looking for ways to build a better life, with all of our children. Coming from the school board, I know, when there is not a stable income coming in to the family, how much it impacts the child's life every day when they come to school and haven't had that fresh breakfast. When there's stress at home, it reflects on the child and it reflects on the whole family unit. We want to be able to strengthen families, strengthen Ontario and build a better lifestyle.

These are the reasons that we need to do this. We need to strengthen our economy. We need to build Ontario up. We need to give everybody that opportunity to earn a decent living in Ontario, live above the poverty line and

be able to afford a decent lifestyle—a lifestyle where, like I said before, they can put food on the table and not worry about their day-to-day expenses. Our government, as I've said, has taken that approach. We are trying to build a fair and equitable society for everybody.

When it comes to tuition, we want to give everybody that opportunity to go out and get a post-secondary education and not worry about how they're going to pay for it. Every child should have that right to dream. Everybody should have to work together; it's our joint responsibility to provide those opportunities. It's our responsibility as a government.

The work world has changed so much over the last 25 years. People in positions of precarious employment need to have this \$15 minimum wage so that they can move forward on it, so that they know how to plan their month, their day and their year, and how to plan their family's lives.

All 22 US federal minimum wage increases between 1938 and 2009 found no correlation between federal minimum wage increases and lower employment levels. So there are supporting examples that will show us that the increase in minimum wage does not mean lower employment levels. There have been a number of supporting factors saying that this will not lead to this.

We'll say that, when people say minimum wage is not fair—it is fair. We have many people in our province who are already paying a living wage, and we heard from them when we did our consultations on Bill 148. They understand how important it is to be a fair employer and provide their staff and their employees with a living wage, as opposed to what we're now having as minimum wage. We've heard from communities across the province, and we know that, with the \$14 minimum wage, many, many people have benefited, and they will continue to benefit when we move over to \$15. I've talked to business owners in my riding, I've talked to constituents in my riding, and I know that they are so excited to be able to be take advantage of this.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this. I know that we are building a fairer Ontario, an equitable Ontario and a better Ontario for Ontarians. We are listening to Ontarians. We are listening to their ask. This is why it's not too soon. We are ready for a \$15 minimum wage, and we will be ready as of January 2019. Ontarians need it, families need it and kids need it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: It's a pleasure to stand in support of motion 61 and the minister of women's affairs. I want to officially take this opportunity to congratulate her on her new position. We're all very proud of this opportunity, and I'm pleased to work with you in the future on all issues pertaining to women's affairs. So congratulations, officially.

I am very pleased to stand in support of this motion. I think that it is, as the minister has said, extremely important that we have brought it forward and that Bill 148 has

passed. It's absolutely critical for our economy. We have heard many times before in this House that our economy is doing well and that Ontario is leading the G7 in economic growth. We've heard countless times as well that we have created almost 800,000 jobs since the recession—800,000 jobs—and we have done so without raising taxes. Our unemployment rate has been below the national average for 34 consecutive months. That's almost three years. This is something to be incredibly proud of.

But we've also heard in this House that not everybody is benefiting from this economy in the same way. Many people who were working in minimum wage jobs were being left behind. There are some incredible challenges for individuals, for families, for single mothers, who have been trying to survive on \$11.60 an hour. It's not fair. It's not possible to support a family on that kind of income.

As many in this House know, previous to my role as an MPP I worked in a federal office for seven years. I have been listening to the concerns of constituents in Kingston and the Islands for seven years on a daily basis, every single day, and I can promise you that my days then and my days now are not eight hours a day. I have been hearing concerns from people who have been trying to survive at a poverty level and working full-time. They have to worry about putting food on the table and they have to worry about child care, but they are also not able to provide their children with recreational opportunities and cultural opportunities that many other people in the community have been able to. So that's another reason why Bill 148 and motion 61 are very, very important for people in our community. We know it's not right that minimum wage workers cannot survive while working full-time. They shouldn't have to worry about making ends meet.

The party opposite doesn't agree with us. I strongly believe that if you work 35 hours or more a week, you deserve a minimum wage. You shouldn't have to struggle to get by, to pay for your own survival or that of your family. It's disappointing that we don't all agree. It's important in this Legislature that we be able to debate these issues and that we bring forward concerns. We all have a particular lens that we view different subjects with, but we need to come together to support Ontarians. When the economy is doing well, it is critical that we make sure people can manage. Families in Ontario and families in Kingston and the Islands can't wait. A delay in raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour is a denial that it is critically important for Ontarians. Rolling back the increase is going to take money away from minimum wage workers.

That is why I am very, very proud that our government is committed to raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour on January 1, 2019. We're standing up for workers in Ontario. We have their backs. I have seen that our Premier has the backs of Ontarians in countless other issues as well. We're looking at OHIP+, where we're protecting children and youth under the age of 25 to receive pharmacare. That is critically important as well,

and that is also going to help families. We're also supporting students through the OSAP program. That is evidence that this government has the backs of Ontarians, and Bill 148 and motion 61 supporting the minimum wage increase is more evidence that we bring forward in this Legislature today to show that we have the backs of Ontarians. We will not back down from that commitment.

There have been a number of different approaches and comments that we have received from different stakeholders across this province. I'm just going to go over a few of those. I think that it's extremely important to make sure that other voices are brought forward in this Legislature. There are small business owners who favour raising the minimum wage. I've got some in my community. Minotaur is a store on Princess Street which was, right out of the gate, public in their support of the minimum wage. They have an absolutely fantastic staff that is very committed to that business.

0920

That is one of the things we are seeing through the minimum wage: that employers who have come out and supported this initiative, who have provided their employees—employees who make their living—they have come forward and they have benefited from being public and from supporting their employees in this manner.

I digress.

Employers that support minimum wage—in 2014, the American Sustainable Business Council and Business for a Fair Minimum Wage said that 53% of small business owners believe that with a higher minimum wage, businesses would benefit from lower employee turnover and increased productivity and customer satisfaction.

And I can say this with absolute certainty because I had a business, as well. I understand the concern of being a business owner. When I had my store in Toronto in the 1980s, I provided some of my employees with \$15 an hour. That was in the 1980s. I saw that employee satisfaction. My employees were there for me when I needed them. When they dealt with customers who came into my store, they treated my shop as if it was their own. That's the kind of loyalty and dedication that comes when employers invest in their employees and provide a living wage, or a sustainable wage, a minimum wage that they can survive on.

David A. Green from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives said in April 2015 that a \$15 minimum wage would significantly boost the income of low-wage workers as a group and is large enough to lift full-time workers out of poverty. A raise to \$15 would mostly affect non-teenagers and would therefore have a much greater impact on working poverty. We have seen this. We know this is true. We know that the individuals who are at that minimum wage scale are staying in the community. Their discretionary income is being spent in the community. That will benefit all of our small businesses.

"Why Increasing the Minimum Wage Does Not Necessarily Reduce Employment," Alan Manning, Social Europe, January 2014: "As the minimum wage rises and

work becomes more attractive, labour turnover rates and absenteeism tend to decline.”

“Minimum Wage Effects Across State Borders: Estimates Using Contiguous Counties,” Arindrajit Dube, T. William Lester and Michael Reich, in 2010—we’re going way back in time. This is 2018. From that report, it was stated that the results were clear. These basic economic indicators show no correlation between federal minimum wage increases and lower employment levels, even in the industries that are most impacted by higher minimum wages. That was eight years ago.

So when we think about why the minimum wage has no discernible effect on employment—that is one of the common things that we’ve been hearing.

John Schmitt from the Center for Economic and Policy Research said in 2013:

“Across all of the empirical research that has investigated the issue, minimum wage increases are consistently associated with statistically significant and economically meaningful increases in the wages of affected workers....

“The research conducted since the early 1990s concludes that the minimum wage has little or no discernible effect on the employment prospects of low-wage workers.”

When you look at another comment, from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in 2015, three years ago: “Economic growth has disproportionately benefited higher-income groups while lower-income households have been left behind. This long-run increase in income inequality tends to drag down the GDP growth due to the rising distance of the lower 40% of the rest of society.”

Another comment, from Arindrajit Dube, T. William Lester and Michael Reich, in a report from the University of California, Berkeley, in 2014, four years ago: “Turnover rates for teens and restaurant workers fall substantially following a minimum wage increase, declining by 2% for every 10% increase in minimum wage.”

The Financial Diaries: How American Families Cope in a World of Uncertainty, Jonathan Morduch, in 2017 said, “Since the 1970s, steady work that pays a predictable and living wage has become increasingly difficult to find. This shift has left many more families vulnerable to income volatility.”

It’s important to focus on that word “predictability.” As a family, if you’re a single mother, if you have children—one, two or more children—you cannot manage your family expenses if you don’t have an income that allows you to plan, that allows you to make sure that you can provide good, sustainable food for your family, or that you might be able to provide recreational opportunities for your children—maybe enrol them in soccer or enrol them in hockey.

I’ve got a grandson who is four. He’s engaged in gymnastics. You can see the benefit that he has from being engaged in that way, from being active and healthy. I’m sure it’s going to pay dividends when he’s in school. He’s now in junior kindergarten. I can tell you that it’s an absolute delight to see him engaged in that way. He looks

forward to it. But if you don’t have an income that allows you to plan, that is predictable, there’s no opportunity to even consider taking those kinds of sport activities and being engaged in that way.

Those who benefit from a minimum wage are important to talk about. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives said in 2017, “Controversy over the \$15 minimum wage tends to focus on the stress it will place on mom-and-pop shops, but the data show that these represent a small portion of the firms where employees will see a raise. Almost 50% work for companies with 500 or more employees.”

A case study was brought forward from the fast food industry in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. David Card and Alan Krueger, in the *American Economic Review*, found, in September 1994, “no indication that the rise in minimum wage reduced employment”—in 1994.

“Publication Selection Bias in Minimum-Wage Research? A Meta-Regression Analysis” states, in the *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, “little or no evidence of a negative association between minimum wages and employment.”

I could go on. There is an incredible volume of resources that support raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. The minister of women’s affairs has brought forward motion 61, and I think that it’s a very important thing that we support that. I know that there’s a lot of opposition from the opposition on this issue. It’s very important that we bring forward some of the different approaches that have been discussed, especially in this interesting political time.

0930

Every single political Conservative leadership candidate has spoken up and promised that a \$15 minimum wage is not happening in 2019. Instead of acknowledging that people are working full-time yet struggling to pay rent, put food on the table or care for their families, they are all saying that they will stop the \$15 minimum wage. Christine Elliott said that she would hold off on the increase for 2019; Doug Ford and Tanya Granic Allen told workers, flat out, “Nope” to the raise; and Caroline Mulroney said that she would put the brakes on that much needed raise for workers, slowing it down to a quarter a year.

Unlike them, we know that this raise can’t wait. How are we, as representatives of our community, going to go back to our community when people come forward in our constituency offices and say to us, “This has been rolled back—I can’t manage. What are you going to do about it?” That cannot happen.

This government will continue to stand up for Ontarians across this province on the minimum wage, on OHIP+ and on OSAP, and our Premier has the backs of Ontarians. I know, Mr. Speaker, that you know that, so thank you.

Now is the time to ensure our most vulnerable are sharing in our plan to create more fairness and opportunity for everyone. As I said in the beginning of my discussion this morning, Ontario’s economy is doing

well. We all know the numbers: 800,000 jobs have been created since the recession, and our growth has been outpacing Canada and the G7 nations. We cannot say that often enough, because that is a fact. We also know that recent analysis from Scotiabank shows that there is no discernable evidence of a minimum wage impact on hours worked in Ontario so far.

The entire opposition caucus voted against fair workplaces and better jobs last year, and now every leadership candidate in the Conservative caucus has promised to cancel the \$15 minimum wage increase.

It's clear that we need to put the focus of everyday Ontarians first. We need to help them put food on the family's table. We need to increase fairness and create opportunity for everyone. We need to allow those families who want to provide healthy food for their family—we want to see those families in the grocery stores not packing up their grocery carts with pasta but with healthy food. With a \$15 minimum wage, free pharmacare for everyone under the age of 25, free tuition for hundreds of thousands of students and better, more affordable child care, we are making Ontario a better and fairer place to live.

Our government is committed to protecting these values, and we can hear it every day in this Legislature, in this chamber, from every single minister on this side of the House and, particularly, from our Premier. We want to protect those values and build a province where everyone has the opportunity to get ahead.

Thank you for listening this morning. I pass my time to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Laura Albanese: Thank you—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I have to recognize you.

The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am pleased to add my voice to the debate this morning and to speak to this motion in support of the minimum wage increase to \$15 an hour by January 1, 2019.

As we've heard, we read every day in the papers about how well the economy is performing in Ontario. At the same time, we well know—it's been mentioned many times in this House—that not all Ontarians are feeling this prosperity and that this is not reflected in their everyday life and in the reality that they live every day.

There is a sense of inequality, that we have not been keeping up with the times. I also want to mention that in Toronto I have heard and read in many reports that a living wage is actually \$16 an hour. So living in an urban centre like Toronto, \$15 an hour would not even be considered a living wage. This is why my colleagues have made the point that people cannot wait. They cannot wait any longer. It is a government's responsibility to try to make sure that no one is left behind, that everybody can share in the prosperity, especially when the economy is doing well, as is happening at the moment.

Mr. Speaker, I think back to early 2007 when I first ran for office. I ran in a by-election that I lost in February 2007. During that by-election, one of the main issues that

were being discussed was an increase in the minimum wage. At that time, our government was still reflecting on that and was analyzing the reports and whether that was going to be possible. At that time, the government did not promise the increase until the general election. In the general election, which I did win in 2007, we had promised an increase in minimum wage, which happened. We increased it seven times after that and it did not have an impact on jobs until then for other reasons; we hit 2008 and the recession.

I want to say that it is important for people—because a lot has changed through time. At that time, if we look back about 10 years, the majority of people who were earning a minimum wage were students or people who chose to work part-time. If we now fast-forward the clock to today, we see, in communities such as the one that I have the privilege to represent, that the people who are earning minimum wage are actually families that are working full-time, families that are working two or three jobs; you'll have newcomers to Canada; you'll have single mothers with children. It's hard for them to make ends meet. So we need to bear the responsibility to take care of them and to make sure that they too can have access to the prosperity that everyone else is feeling.

In the past year and a half or two years, I have met with many advocates, many groups, many religious groups, but more importantly with residents, with constituents, who have brought forward what their situation is currently. There are many people who had been advocating for this before the government made the decision—the right decision—because it is only fitting that we do not leave anyone behind.

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We're celebrating the lunar new year. Many communities in Ontario—that is so diverse—during the past few weeks have been celebrating the lunar new year. I went with my colleague Sue Wong, MPP for Scarborough–Agincourt, and MPP Mike Colle, my colleague from Eglinton–Lawrence, to one of the local grocery stores in my area to wish the people a happy lunar new year, a happy Chinese New Year, just last week. People were shopping. A gentleman near the cashier recognized me as his local MPP and said, “Do you see how busy the grocery store is, MPP Albanese? Everyone has a little more money in their pocket.” I could just see joy in his face.

I'm just talking about a real example. I'm trying to bring a real example to this House because sometimes when we talk, it would seem that we're talking about prosperity, about inequality, but we're not translating that to what people are actually living in their everyday life.

Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more with the fact that this needs to happen. It cannot be rolled back. People need help. This is why our government has been trying to put forward initiatives to try to help families in the best way possible, for example, through free tuition for 250,000 students who could not otherwise afford it, through free prescription drugs for young people under 25. These are concrete initiatives that help families get by

and help them, with dignity, reach a little more success in their own lives. That's very important.

As Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, I see a lot of newcomers to this country. I talk to a lot of them. I was once an immigrant myself. When you first arrive here, you're very busy trying to make ends meet. You're very busy trying to set roots in the city, in the country, and you're trying to raise your family. You want the best opportunities for your children. This is why you came here, to have a better future, not only for yourself but for your family and especially for your children, and every little bit counts. It makes a big difference.

When you first arrive, you don't usually have the network to get the best job that would be available to you. Many immigrants can share a history of having to accept the first job that was offered to them, and then they slowly build their way up to finding a job in the field they studied for and becoming a little more successful in their own setting. Whatever the government can do to help them to integrate and thrive in our society is very important. It is our duty. That's why I think it is very important that we do not take the chance to roll back a minimum wage increase that makes such a big difference in people's lives.

I want to conclude by saying that—I should have mentioned that earlier; I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker—I wanted to share my time with the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville. I hope you will forgive me. I should have said that off the top. I hope that my colleague will be able to continue the conversation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Speaker. I'm also delighted to join in, adding my voice to this debate. I just wanted to get confirmation. How much time do I have?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Twenty-one minutes.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: An entire 21 minutes. I will be sharing some of this time with my fellow MPPs; I believe the MPP from Davenport will be sharing some time with me.

Mr. Speaker, to me it's very simple. If somebody is working 40 hours a week full-time, they ought to be able to have a decent standard of living. They ought not to have to go to a food bank to feed their family. It's as simple as that. Do we want an Ontario where somebody working full-time, eight hours a day, 40 hours a week still has to rely on a food bank to put food on the table for their families? I think we can all agree that's not the kind of Ontario we want to live in. That's why we have raised the minimum wage first to \$14 this past January 1, 2018, and we will be raising it further to \$15 an hour January 1, 2019. I have to say that of all the things that we in government have done—there are many, many things that I'm very proud of, but this one is particularly something that I feel strongly about.

I also understand that for small businesses—we need to make sure that this transition is fair to them. That is why we came up with a robust small business package

that includes reducing the small business tax by 1%. There's much more that we are doing, including incentives for some small businesses that hire youth workers, for instance. The Ontario government will be providing them with a subsidy. We have eliminated the capital gains tax and we are making massive investments to ensure Ontario's workforce remains highly skilled.

One of the knocks that the Conservative Party sometimes makes brings Ontario down by saying that Ontario is not a competitive place to do business in. But all of the evidence shows that's not the case. In fact, as it turns out, three out of the five top cities in North America to do business in happen to be in Ontario, a business-friendly place. The Ontario PC Party may not think that Ontario is a competitive place to do business in, but it turns out that the rest of the world does think that Ontario is a very competitive place to do business in, and we will continue to advocate for that.

I also just wanted to say that often the debate on the minimum wage centres on that hourly wage increase, but along with it we made some very critical changes. One of the ones that I think is really good is that if somebody works for five years for one employer, they are entitled to three weeks' vacation instead of the usual two weeks. I think we can all agree that that is something that is really important for work-life balance. We spend a significant amount of our lives working. I think it's really important that we be able to take some time off to enjoy the fruits of our labour, so the three weeks' vacation, I believe, is very welcome. I know we have all travelled and in many parts of the world, particularly in Europe, four or five weeks is the norm. When you consider the fact that it's a 52-week year, three weeks is not an unreasonable amount of time. That is another one that I'm very supportive of.

We have also said, equal pay for equal work. If somebody who is doing a part-time job is doing exactly the same thing as somebody who is doing a full-time job, fairness would suggest that the hourly wage be the same. Obviously, the take-home pay would be different because somebody is working fewer hours than full-time. But there's no reason the hourly wage ought to be different if they're doing the same job.

These are some of the other changes that I think get lost in the debate around minimum wage. We've done a lot to improve and protect Ontario's workers. As they say, you get what you pay for, and quality shouldn't cost more in the long run. I think we can all agree that quality really shouldn't cost us more in the long run and we get what we pay for. So if we pay our employees well, then we get good quality, which in the long run is actually cheaper than lower quality.

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There are so many different reasons to pay the minimum wage, and there's a good business case to be made, but I think, to me, the most heartening thing is the human story. What is the point of growing our economy, what is the point of making our province richer, if that wealth is not going to be shared? Is Ontario a better place if our GDP increases but most of that increase goes to a select

few places? Or is Ontario a better place if our GDP increases and that increase in wealth is more broadly shared?

I think, as Liberals, we do believe that a rising tide should lift all boats, not just some boats. That is the spirit behind raising the minimum wage. It's a small way of saying that those who are the most vulnerable, those who are often doing the jobs that many of us may not want to do, ought to get a little bit of the rising tide, that their boats, their standards of living, should also rise.

I have met many of my residents. I have knocked on many doors over the past few months, often in high-rise buildings, because the weather is cold, so high-rise buildings are a good place to be knocking on doors, and I have yet to meet somebody in these buildings who has said, "Oh, I'm opposed to the minimum wage." It's not that everybody there is making the minimum wage—many are making more than the minimum wage—but they understand how hard it is in today's Toronto, in today's Mississauga, to live on \$11.60 an hour. It's just not possible. So we have made a good start and I'm very proud of this.

I'm a little disappointed that all of the leadership candidates in the PC race are saying that they are going to hold off on raising the minimum wage to \$15 on January 1, 2019. I have to ask why. Why would you deny the most vulnerable of Ontarians the dignity that should come with working full-time? If you are working 40 hours a week, eight hours a day—why would you deny these people the dignity of not being forced to go to a food bank to put food on the table? That's the simple question. You have to ask yourself: Whose side are you on? Are you on the side of the vast majority of Ontarians or not? I understand that there are many stakeholders as we raise the \$15 minimum wage. There are ways to balance the needs and concerns of all of the stakeholders. But why would you deny a raise to the poorest of the poor?

My only question to the PC Party would be, if you are going to say that somehow Ontario should not increase the minimum wage, would you say the same for all of the CEOs in Ontario? Would you say that you're against a raise for all of the CEOs in the year 2019?

Interjection: Yes.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Well, say that. Because I have never heard any of you say that. All of you come out and say that you will be against raising the minimum wage, but if it comes to the rich—

Mr. John Yakabuski: You're the government; pass a law.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Oh, "A 300% increase to a CEO's salary? Not a problem." I have never heard—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the House to come to order so that I can hear the member who has the floor.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Speaker.

It's really interesting that when it comes to the richest of the rich, there is no protest when their wages or their

salaries increase. But somebody who is making \$14 an hour? Oh my goodness, the world is going to come down if we increase their wages. I think that's something that we all need to ask ourselves.

I'm very pleased to be supporting the minimum wage. Now I'm going to turn this over to my colleague, the member from Davenport.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Davenport, if she chooses to participate in the debate.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you, Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise in the House today and add my voice to the debate that is being had in the House today.

I think it's everyone's knowledge that many business leaders from across the world are choosing to invest in Ontario. This is because we have a vibrant and diversified economy, a very competitive corporate tax regime and some of the most highly educated and skilled workers in the world. Greater equality, which our plan seeks to do, is foundational for a strong economy. Putting more money in the hands of hard-working Ontarians is always good for businesses. By creating more equitable workplaces, we're making Ontario an even more attractive place to work and do business.

What we are doing now will ensure that everyone has the opportunity to benefit from all the efforts we've made between government, businesses and workers, to benefit from these initiatives and share in the growth of the economy.

To do that, we have taken various steps and put some investments into place. We eliminated the capital tax. We reduced the small business corporate income tax rate. We're investing \$190 billion over 13 years in infrastructure. We're committed to keeping our corporate income taxes competitive. We're making massive investments to ensure that Ontario's workforce remains highly skilled. Through the fair hydro plan, 500,000 small businesses will be getting 25% off their electricity bills.

Our economy is doing very well. We are leading the G7 in economic growth, and, as has already been said in this House this morning, we've created almost 800,000 jobs since the recession. Our unemployment rate has been below the national average for 34 months.

But we know that not everyone is feeling the benefits of that prosperity. We have millions of workers in Ontario who are finding it almost impossible to support their families on a minimum wage that just doesn't go far enough. It is time that this rate reflected the reality of people's lives. Raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour gives 30% of Ontarians a pay increase, ensuring that more workers are benefiting from Ontario's economic growth. A \$15 minimum wage phased in over 18 months is good for workers, but it can also be good for businesses too. When businesses pay fairly, living standards rise and reliance on benefits falls. Higher wages also lead to greater job satisfaction and productivity, less turnover and more spending power for lower-income earners.

Beyond the positive impact, the minimum wage increase speaks to our values. It's about equal opportun-

ity, ensuring that those who work hard and play by the rules are rewarded. It's our job as government to make sure our society reflects those values. Whether it's child care or health care, rent control or workplace fairness, the motivation behind them is the same: They all help to build an Ontario where greater opportunity is available for everyone and greater security is achievable for everyone.

Over the past number of years, I've spoken with many of my constituents in my riding of Davenport about the nature of their work and how it has changed. I've also had the opportunity to meet on numerous occasions with the advocacy group Fight for \$15 and Fairness, and had the opportunity to write to the Minister of Labour about the \$15 minimum wage.

Everyone I met with spoke about how hard they are working to put food on their table, take care of their children and pay the bills, but they are finding that the money runs out before the month ends. This isn't right. Those who are earning minimum wage shouldn't have to worry about making ends meet. While the party opposite doesn't agree with this, I strongly believe that everyone who works 35 or 40 hours a week deserves to earn a decent wage. They shouldn't have to struggle to get by. It's disappointing that the party opposite doesn't agree.

We know that over the last few weeks, the PCs have made it clear that they would delay an increase to a \$15 minimum wage, but they won't say for how long. They think that \$15 an hour is too much, and January 1 of next year is too soon. But we know that families of Ontario cannot afford to wait. My constituents cannot afford to wait. Delaying \$15 an hour is the same as denying \$15 an hour. We know that \$15 an hour is not a livable wage in many city centres across this province. Families in my riding of Davenport are counting on this increase. This is money they rely on for food, for rent, for child care and for transit.

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Before January 1 of this year, 30% of Ontarians were making less than \$15 an hour, and over half of those were between the ages of 24 and 64. Those are workers who are trying to raise families. I strongly believe that we need to increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour on January 1, 2019.

I'm proud that our government is standing up for workers and making changes that will support them. We won't back down from our commitment. That's why I'm so proud that our government is committed to raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour on January 1, 2019.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, I had the opportunity to travel this province in the summer and earlier this year, when we heard from various business owners about the \$15 minimum wage. There was one particular presenter who stuck in my mind and whom I've quoted various times. Her name is Jessica Carpinoni. She's the owner of Bread By Us, an artisan bakery and espresso bar in Ottawa. This is what she said:

"I know, from experience opening my own bakery, that it is by no means simple and easy to run a small

business. We didn't start with much, had to make money quickly, and the personal sacrifices have been immense. However, I have always vowed that I would not build a business that did not prioritize above-average labour standards. And this to me, is really the key. We as entrepreneurs need to be forward-thinking and not build and model our businesses on poverty-level wages."

I want to thank Jessica for her presentation that day in Ottawa and for being an example for small businesses across this province that it is possible.

Once again, I'm very proud that our government is committed to raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour come January 1, 2019.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sorry; you were not introduced to speak.

We will now go to the official opposition.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's just another example of the government failing to get their act together in this building.

Mrs. Gila Martow: You'll be sharing your time.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I know. I want to get the first thing in first, but thanks, mom.

I will be sharing my time with the member from Thornhill.

Speaker, it's interesting that at a time when the government says they have a very busy and packed agenda before this Legislature rises for what we know is going to be the June 7 election, they can't seem to really get it together. So instead of debating the business of the House this morning, we're rehashing Bill 148.

The reality is that everything the Liberals are talking about this morning has already been determined. It has been passed by law. It is the law today. It is the law that on January 1, the minimum wage went to \$14, and on January 1, 2019, it will go to \$15. That's the law that this Legislature passed. If that's going to change, then the law would have to be changed. But the matter has been determined.

Boy, I heard an awful lot of stuff from Liberal members today who see this only through one side. The reason they do that is that this is so politically motivated. They talk about how they're determined to have the backs of the vulnerable. They're the party that cares about those people who are underpaid. But it's interesting that they did nothing to raise this wage in any substantive way prior to the eve of the election—nothing. They agreed with and they passed legislation and regulation that would tie increases in minimum wage to the rate of inflation. All of a sudden, when this government realized that they were in big trouble and they felt they had to pull a rabbit out of a hat—

Mr. John Fraser: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I didn't quite catch it, but the member opposite said he was disappointed that

we were not debating our agenda this morning. It was the member and the member's party who put forward reasoned amendments that prevented us from debating what we had scheduled this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Ottawa South, that's not a point of order. I'll remind the member that your party brought forward this motion, and he has a right to speak to it.

Continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate the clarity from the member from Ottawa South, but it only adds to my argument that it's their job to understand the business they have before the Legislature and all of the possibilities that could happen as a result of their failure to get their act together. It is part of the standing orders that the opposition has the right to table a reasoned amendment to legislation, so that there's an opportunity to re-examine that before it goes to debate.

If this government doesn't have enough bills or business in the hopper to actually bring something before the House, surely to goodness, Speaker, that is not the fault of the opposition in any way, shape or form. If they don't have their act together, they cannot blame it on the opposition. They should have known that that was a possibility and it is the right of the opposition to proceed in that fashion.

But let's get to the matters at hand. They talk about caring about the vulnerable, caring about those who matter. They didn't do anything to help those people. But all of a sudden, on the eve of the election, they bring it out in Bill 148, which was never discussed in any way, shape or form during the Changing Workplaces Review, which was supposed to be part of the Labour Relations Act changes and the Employment Standards Act changes. All of a sudden, on June 1, they tabled that bill. Really, the most significant piece in it was the change in the rate of the minimum wage. Yet it had never been discussed in the two years before that during the negotiations and discussions and consultations on the Changing Workplaces Review.

But as I said, they felt they had to do something significant, something desperate, something that was going to shake the world, and they decided, "All of a sudden, we now care about those people." Did they care about those people when hydro rates went up 300% in Ontario? Did they care about those people?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Yes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Absolutely not.

They talk about food banks. What was sending people to food banks? It was the fact that you did nothing to try to ease the pain on those families when you raised hydro rates 300%. They weren't talking about their wages; they were asking whether or not they could heat or eat. That was the phrase that went across this province.

When I talked to people at food banks in my riding, they were absolutely at their wit's end about how they were going to deal with the issue of people in rural Ontario, particularly, where those wages are lower—and

we don't live in condominiums; most people live in free-standing homes that face the elements on all four sides, four seasons of the year. How were they going to pay their electricity bills? How were they going to pay them? So many of them were making the choice that they had to make: paying their bills and going to the food bank, or not paying their bills.

They decided to pay their bills—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. There have been a couple of outbursts from that side. I would appreciate it if you would pull it back a little bit. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Not paying their bills at that time could see that their electricity was cut off. But then, under pressure from the opposition and pressure from advocates across this province, you guys had to actually change the rules so they couldn't have their electricity cut off in the wintertime. They pay their bills, but now they have no money to go to that grocery store to buy food, so they're going to the food bank.

This is the Ontario that Kathleen Wynne and the Liberals developed and made for the people of Ontario. This is their Ontario, their vision: put people down so far that they have to go to food banks. Now the Premier says all of a sudden the minimum wage is going to close the food banks. She implied yesterday that people wouldn't need to go to food banks now.

1010

In your province, they'll still be going to food banks, because you've raised the cost of living to the point where they cannot compete. They cannot keep up. That's why you people are in trouble in this province.

The member from Kingston said that there's no record that changes in the minimum wage change the rates of employment. She's citing a study from New Jersey in 1994. Did the wages in New Jersey in 1994 go up 32%? No.

Previous increases that were tied to the rate of inflation or some other formula were never as drastic and never as severe. But these changes have affected employment.

In fact, in January, Ontario lost 59,300 part-time jobs.

Speaker, I have this right here from the Canadian Press: "Ontario Sheds 59K Part-Time Jobs in Jan. as New ... Minimum Wage Begins."

It's the biggest loss in my time here as a member, and perhaps the biggest loss ever in a single month. They can say that the minimum wage increase has nothing to do with it. But stop with the studies from 1994 and talk about the real studies, the ones where you go down your neighbourhood street and talk to the business person who is now being affected by this.

They're cutting hours because they've got no choice. They can't raise prices by 32%. They're cutting hours and they're closing—stores that used to be open till 9 at night are now open till 7 or 6.

I received a letter from a constituent in my riding who I had written a letter to maybe eight months ago now,

when her husband passed away. She sent me a nice card thanking me for the letter, but she also wrote me in January about her job at a local business. I haven't spoken to the business about it so I won't name them. Her hours were cut. She's not blaming the business. In her letter, she's blaming Kathleen Wynne for not even thinking about what the obvious effects of this would be. She used to make \$382 a week, clear. With the minimum wage increase, she's now making \$380.16. So her wages didn't go up; in fact, they went down slightly, because the taxes are more and her hours have been cut. She absolutely supports, 100%, her employer, who is trying to keep her and other people working but has no other choice but to cut their expenses, because the government just decided, "We're going to send a social program onto the backs of small business, and they're going to have to pay, because we need those votes in June 2018." It was irresponsible. It was not well thought-out.

They talk about niche businesses saying, "Oh, we pay our people more than \$15 an hour." Well, some people can afford to buy coffee at Starbucks, and some people can't. Some people don't want to pay \$5 for a latte or a coffee or whatever. It's just not in their DNA. If there are people who can go to niche businesses and pay exorbitant prices for products that are available elsewhere for a more reasonable price, so be it. If people are willing to pay, then that business can pay their employees more. But most people want to buy the best product at the best price. So this government likes to cite examples of little niche businesses that think this is just fine—"We're not affected by it"—but they're ignoring the tens of thousands of businesses across Ontario that are being affected negatively.

Speaker, I'm going to go right till you tell me to, because I know the time will be coming shortly. I just want to remind you that I will be sharing the time with my colleague from Thornhill. There are so many things that I could be talking about. Because I don't know when this might come back, I wanted to make sure that it's on the record that she will be speaking to it. We could talk for hours and hours and hours.

I hope the government continues to bring this debate, but at the same time, my goodness, they must have something else in the hopper that hasn't already been debated. But if they want to continue to talk about—thank you very much, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The time is done at 10:15. This House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to welcome Liam and Suzanne McCreery to the Legislature today. They are at Queen's Park this week with their son Jacob, who is participating in the Ontario model Parlia-

ment. I want to welcome the whole family to Queen's Park and thank them all for being here.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: This morning I would like to welcome various stakeholders who are here to support Ontario's first-ever Human Trafficking Awareness Day. I would like to introduce Clovis Grant, CEO of 360°kids; Bonnie Harkness, director of operations at 360°kids; Larry Shanks, executive director of SafeHope Home; Sue Wilkinson from Findhelp Information Services; and Tessa Mcfadzean, chair of the Hamilton Anti-Human Trafficking Coalition and director of Good Shepherd services in Hamilton.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park members of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario from the region of Durham. They include Angela Cooper Brathwaite, Regina Elliott and Lhamo Dolkar. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Good morning. I'm very pleased to welcome some dear friends of mine. John Trainor and Judy Kalman are here at Queen's Park. I hope you enjoy your visit. Thanks for being here.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'd like to welcome representatives from the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects: Aina Budrevics, executive director of OALA; Doris Chee, president of OALA governing council; Glenn O'Connor, past president of the OALA governing council; and Tim Dobson, OALA practice legislation committee member. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to welcome two RNAO members that I met with this morning from the London area. I'd like to welcome Aaron Clark and Jennifer Black. Thank you for the information today at breakfast.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to also welcome a great partner of ours to the Legislature today, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. Please join me in welcoming CEO Doris Grinspun, special guest Shane Choinard, and the rest of the RNAO team, who work extremely hard every day for nurses and patients across Ontario.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Two separate sets of introductions today.

From OSPE, we have Jonathan Hack, who is president and chair of the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers; Karen Chan, past president and chair; Tibor Turi, director; and Marilyn Spink, PEO councillor and OSPE political action network member; and from Professional Engineers Ontario, George Comrie, the past president of PEO; Lola Hidalgo Salgado, the PEO councillor of the PEO; and Jeannette Chau, the manager of government liaison programs.

And this morning, from the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, at breakfast I met with—all from North Bay—Kathryn Ewers, assistant professor at Nipissing University; Bradley Manuel, second-year Nipissing University student; and James Bunker, a registered nurse at the North Bay Regional Health Centre.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to introduce Mr. Keith Scott, his sister Shanon Garon and grandma Annie Scott, all the way in from Schreiber.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'd like to introduce Emma Callon from Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis, who is here today to support Human Trafficking Awareness Day. Welcome.

Mr. Steve Clark: Speaker, I want to introduce, to you and through you, to members of the Legislative Assembly a constituent from my riding of Leeds-Grenville who is here with the RNAO. I'd like to introduce Jane Hess from the Lanark Leeds Grenville chapter. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Harinder Malhi: Today we mark our first-ever Human Trafficking Awareness Day. I would like to welcome Chuck MacLean, the executive director of Family Services of Peel; Sandra Rupnarain, the director of client services at Family Services of Peel; Farah Ahmed, from Women's Health in Women's Hands Community Health Centre; and, from the Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario, Trina James and Nour Alideeb, and Talayeh Shomali, coordinator at Justice Projects. Thank you for all of your work, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's an honour to welcome to the Legislature today a constituent from my riding of Niagara West-Glanbrook who is here with the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. Welcome, Nathan Kelly, to the Ontario Legislature.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: As mentioned in the House, we have the great pleasure of welcoming the RNAO, but I want also to give a shout-out to all of our nurses who are working in our correctional institutions who are here this morning at Queen's Park. I had a great meeting this morning with some of our Ottawa caucus members, particularly Shirley Kennedy. I want to say thank you for all the work she does.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm very pleased today to welcome to the House a caring professional, Christy Butler. She is here with the RNAO. She works out of the Clinton hospital.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure, Madam Speaker, to welcome my friends and constituents Ms. Nina Kashefpour and Mr. Hamidreza Safipoor. Please join me in welcoming them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to introduce Veronique Boscart from the Waterloo chapter of RNAO. She's a real advocate for long-term care. Thanks for being here.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, I'd like to introduce Parisa Mahdian, who is the chair of the Oakville chapter of the Professional Engineers of Ontario. Please welcome her to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to welcome Claire Debruin, an intern from Ohio who started working in our office today. We're pleased to have her join us in the office and welcome her to Queen's Park.

Hon. Daiene Vernile: It gives me great pleasure to welcome to Queen's Park a family friend from Waterloo region, Joe Gowing. Welcome to the Legislature.

Speaker, I want to congratulate the women's Olympic hockey team for winning a silver medal in a really hard-fought game against the Americans. It was not the result

we were looking for, but we look forward to the next games.

Mr. Ross Romano: I want to take this opportunity to give a very warm welcome to one of our pages from Sault Ste. Marie, Asia Boston. Where's Asia? Welcome, Asia.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to welcome Jill Staples, who is the Peterborough representative of RNAO. I couldn't be at their breakfast this morning because I was speaking to the annual meeting of the Beef Farmers of Ontario.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It gives me great pleasure to introduce a number of people from the Trillium Party of Ontario. We have candidates Amit Pitamber, Lonnie Herrington, Lucy Guerrero, Carlos Lacuna, Chris Mellor, Andre Imbeault and Liz Marshall; Tom Black, president of the Ontario Landowners Association; and my wife, Janet, whom I love more than anything.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: It gives me real warmth to welcome, from my riding of Kingston and the Islands, from the RNAO, Allison Kern, Megan Laan and Caroline Frankfurter, but also Doris Grinspun, the CEO of the RNAO. I would like to acknowledge her for being the first nurse to receive an honorary doctorate from the Universitat de Lleida in Spain. Welcome to Queen's Park.

1040

Hon. Laura Albanese: I too, with great pleasure, would like to welcome to Queen's Park members of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario whom I met this morning: my very own constituent Angela Golabek, and also Hilda Swirsky, Maria Negri and Kay McGarvey. Thank you. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais remercier l'Association des infirmières et infirmiers autorisés de l'Ontario pour leur journée à Queen's Park. Je cherche Paul-André Gauthier—je sais qu'il est là; je ne le vois pas—et David Groulx.

I'd like to welcome members of the RNAO. I have a long list: Angela Cooper Brathwaite, Nathan Kelly, Hilda Swirsky, Allison Kern, Michelle Spadoni, Maria Rugg, Una Ferguson, Christine Bintakies, Aaron Clark, Regina Elliott, Crystal Hepburn, Paula Manuel, Kamala Persad-Ford, Megan Simpson and Janet Hunt.

Welcome to Queen's Park. Thank you, nurses.

Mr. James J. Bradley: I would like to introduce nurses from St. Catharines, the RNAO group: Holly Rogers, Julie Rubel and Lydia Tarasiuk.

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: I'd like to introduce again—he has already been introduced this morning—Joe Gowing, a long-time friend of mine, in the members' east gallery.

Also, I know she has been recognized already, but Doris Grinspun from the RNAO and I have worked together since the 1990s as nurses. Welcome, again, to Queen's Park.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to join my colleagues who have introduced the provincial leadership of Professional Engineers Ontario, the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers and the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today Natalia Kusendova, who is a policy and political action ENO. Thank you very much for joining us today.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'd like to welcome RN Kathleen Pikaart from the great riding of Northumberland—Quinte West. I had the pleasure of having breakfast with her this morning, along with Dhara Shah and student Nicole Forster.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to introduce Lisa Herlehy to the House today. I had breakfast with her this morning with the RNAO. She's a nurse practitioner with the wellness centre on the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte Tyendinaga territory. Thank you.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to welcome the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario to Queen's Park today. I had an opportunity to meet this morning with two members from Thunder Bay. A special welcome to Robin Billard, who is a second-year nursing compressed student—good luck on her career path—and to Sally Dampier from the RNAO.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I want to introduce a special guest here today in the House: Philip Gillies, MPP for Brantford in the 32nd and 33rd Parliaments. Welcome to Queen's Park.

NOTICES OF REASONED AMENDMENTS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 71(c), the member for Huron—Bruce has filed with the Clerk a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 194, An Act respecting fairness in procurement. The order for second reading of Bill 194 may therefore not be called today.

I beg to inform the House that—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order. Order.
Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): It's never too early to warn members, or to name. Order.

I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 71(c), the member for Chatham—Kent—Essex has filed with the Clerk a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 195, An Act to enact the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services Act, 2018 and the Correctional Services and Reintegration Act, 2018, to make related amendments to other Acts, to repeal an Act and to revoke a regulation. The order for second reading of Bill 195 may therefore not be called today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

RURAL ONTARIO

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is to the—

Interjections.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: If they let me, Speaker, my question will be for the Acting Premier.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker.

To the Acting Premier: Keith Currie, the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, said, "Much of rural Ontario is actually feeling very abandoned." Why has this government abandoned rural Ontario?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Opposition this morning. I want to congratulate him on assuming his new position here in the House.

Let me respond from this perspective: When you look at agriculture today in the province of Ontario, it is the leading economic driver, with \$37.5 billion to Ontario's GDP. Some 800,000 Ontarians are employed in this sector each and every day. The foundation of all this is 50,000 family farms in the province of Ontario.

If you just take a moment to tour the back concessions and sit at the kitchen tables, we are seeing unprecedented expansion in dairy, in chickens and in eggs. In fact, I have a letter sitting on my desk from Mark Brock, the former head of the Grain Farmers of Ontario, thanking us for our leadership in initiating a national review of business—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you.

Hon. Jeff Leal: —for farmers in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Acting Premier: The Ontario Federation of Agriculture added that rural Ontario needs "infrastructure investments like widespread broadband" and "access to affordable energy, especially natural gas." Rural Ontario needs "increased social infrastructure including local schools and medical care centres" that "will attract new businesses, it will increase new jobs and it will attract new residents."

But this Ontario government has turned its back again on rural Ontario. In fact, rural Ontario has been abandoned by this Liberal government. Madam Speaker, that must change.

Will the budget increase support for rural Ontario?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Madam Speaker, it's a little rich, coming from this party. Every time that we had major initiatives for infrastructure in any of our budgets over the last 15 years that I've had the great privilege of representing the people from Peterborough riding, these folks over here voted against it.

Let's have a little history here. In 1998 or 1999 there was a famous commission that they put in place called the Who Does What Commission. I remember it very well. I remember it extremely well. Most people in municipal government renamed that commission the "who got done in commission." And who got done in? Municipalities right across the province of Ontario.

I remind these folks over there, 43% of all the roads and bridges were downgraded in eastern Ontario, and I must say, this government is digging out of that ditch that they left.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I will return to the leader of Her Majesty's opposition.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Acting Premier—

Interjection: How many have you taken back?

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order. You know the rules. This is not your playground, okay? Next time I stand up again with interruptions, someone will be named. I'm warning.

I return to the leader of Her Majesty's opposition.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Bob Gordanier, the president of the Beef Farmers of Ontario and a current Liberal candidate, says, "Our number one ask with the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition is to raise the cap" for the Risk Management Program.

He added, "Our message to government has been clear—the \$100-million cap has compromised the stability, predictability and timeliness" the program provides. It's "making it less effective and less responsive."

Ontario must act to support rural Ontario. Madam Speaker, will the Acting Premier commit to raising the Risk Management Program cap?

1050

Hon. Jeff Leal: Madam Speaker, I'm trying to be as calm as I can here. It's rather interesting. When we proposed a \$100-million Risk Management Program, they voted against it. When their federal cousins were in Ottawa, they did not lift one hand in the federal government at that time to match the Ontario initiative at 60%. They were nowhere to be found.

Frankly, we're doing a review of the RMP in the province of Ontario that is going to make a more effective program for the non-supply-managed groups here in Ontario. In fact, it was Ontario's leadership alone that has brought about a national review, a business risk management program, applauded by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, applauded by the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, applauded by the National Farmers Union and applauded by every farmer in the back concessions of Ontario.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Minister of the Status of Women.

Today marks the first-ever Human Trafficking Awareness Day in Ontario. As you know, this is an issue that I care deeply about. Over the past several years, I've travelled across this province, meeting with survivors, victim services organizations, police officers and many others to encourage co-operation and raise awareness about this horrible crime that targets our children, mostly young girls who are an average age of 14 years old, and 93% are Canadian-born. One of the reactions I keep getting when speaking with parents, grandparents and

young people is absolute shock at these statistics, and the fact that this crime is happening right in our neighbourhoods, whether it's in big cities or small towns, from Kenora to Timmins or from Ottawa to Windsor.

On this Human Trafficking Awareness Day, will the government commit to funding comprehensive, province-wide awareness campaigns to educate Ontarians about how to recognize and fight human sex trafficking?

Hon. Harinder Malhi: I thank the member opposite for the question. Human trafficking is a devastating crime that violates human rights, and I want you to know that we are working very hard to help survivors receive the supports they need and to put an end to it.

Last year, we launched Ontario's Strategy to End Human Trafficking and made an investment of close to \$72 million. As part of our human trafficking strategy, we passed the Anti-Human Trafficking Act, 2017. This act allows for survivors to apply for restraining orders against human traffickers, to protect themselves or their children from traffickers. It will make it easier for survivors of human trafficking to gain compensation from those who traffic them, in order to restore and rebuild their lives. And, of course, it proclaims February 22 as Human Trafficking Awareness Day.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return back to the member from Kawartha Lakes.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Again to the minister: Thank you for absorbing parts of the bill we've been fighting for on this side for over two years, the Saving the Girl Next Door Act.

Ontario is known to be a major hub for human sex trafficking in North America, and yet other jurisdictions, whether it's Manitoba or New York, are way ahead of us when it comes to public awareness initiatives. In those jurisdictions, you can't go through an airport or go to a hotel without seeing a poster informing the public about human sex trafficking and educating passersby about how to spot potential victims.

Why is it that this government cannot find the money to fund advertising that can raise an awareness campaign that could actually help save the lives of human sex trafficking victims today, instead of finding money to fund self-serving hydro ads? Will the government today commit to an awareness campaign that can actually help save the lives of human sex trafficking victims?

Hon. Harinder Malhi: Madam Speaker, it is unacceptable that people in our society are at risk of being trafficked. I want you to know that, across government, we take this issue very seriously. Here's what we've done so far.

We have our Human Trafficking Lived Experience Roundtable, which will strengthen the province's efforts to end human trafficking through direct engagement input from survivors of trafficking. We have enhanced funding by \$6.65 million to 47 community-based service partners delivering the victim crisis assistance program, and expanded the Victim/Witness Assistance Program by \$767,000 to hire new specialized human trafficking victim service workers. We've expanded the Victim

Quick Response Program by \$1.93 million to allow victims of human trafficking to access new benefits. We are hiring for the new provincial human trafficking prosecution team—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Answer.

I return back to the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Minister, this is a real crisis happening to real people, happening to our children. What can be more important than educating the public and our children about this horrible crime of exploitation?

The reality is that every elementary school and every high school in Ontario is a target for traffickers. Elementary school principals in my riding have told me that children are regularly getting text messages luring them into modelling. What 12- or 14-year-old wouldn't be tempted to have such an extremely attractive offer? The fact is, they can fall into the trap of trafficking in as little as 24 hours. Education about human sex trafficking needs to be in our schools.

Why has the government chosen to ignore the urgent need to educate our kids about human sex trafficking like other jurisdictions do?

Hon. Harinder Malhi: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Michael Coteau: We had the opportunity to go right across the province to talk to leaders and advocates about best positioning young children and youth here in the province to prevent sex trafficking. We brought forward a very comprehensive piece of legislation, Bill 89. Bill 89 does something that speaks to exactly what that member is talking about. It raises the age of protection for child protection.

But we know that the Conservative Party here in the province voted against it. We know that the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills told Ottawa Community News that there was a caucus meeting where the members from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, Kitchener–Conestoga, Chatham–Kent–Essex and Niagara West–Glanbrook insisted that they need to vote against Bill 89 because the life coalition told them to do that.

You should do what's in the best interests of children and stand up for the children and families in this province.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order. I'm going to recognize the leader of the third party.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Madam Speaker, I'd like to start by sharing New Democrats' concerns with the people of Brantford who are dealing with the serious flooding, as well as the family and community members in Orangeville who are dealing with the tragedy that's unfolding with the missing three-year-old young boy.

My question is for the Premier, or Acting Premier, I guess. Kristen and David Ronald are a Hamilton couple, and right now they are spending their sixth day stuck in

Costa Rica. The Ronalds were on vacation last week when David had a very serious fall. He went into emergency surgery on Friday and was ready to be transferred home to Hamilton on Saturday for further surgeries, but he was told that there were no hospital beds available for him. David had to have his second surgery as a result in Costa Rica. He and Kristen are finally able to come home today.

What is the Liberal government's excuse for why this couple spent six days in a foreign country waiting for a hospital bed to open up at home?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: First of all, I want to express my deepest concern for the Ronald family as they go through this difficult crisis and experience. It's stressful any time a loved one is injured or requires surgery, whether that be here or abroad.

Madam Speaker, I know that there's nothing more important to all of us than the health and safety of our loved ones. When it comes to a situation like this, the hospital, the insurance company and all of us can do better in coordinating that care. My staff have confirmed that an average of 10 intensive care unit beds were available throughout the Hamilton Niagara LHIN this past weekend and more than 140 intensive care beds available across the province. However, we cannot verify whether the insurer contacted all hospitals in the region.

What is important now, however, is that we make the full service of Ontario's health care system completely available to this family.

But I need to mention that the LHIN was not contacted, my ministry was not contacted with regard to this case and my office was not contacted with regard to this case.

1100

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think it's pretty sad when the Minister of Health blames an insurance company for the failures of his government and his ministry.

The Ronalds are scared, Speaker. David is lucky to be alive right now. They have been through a lot this past week and the whole time, all they wanted was to come home. David is in stable condition now, but he and Kristen have been through an ordeal that no Ontario family should have to face.

Is this crisis finally clear to the government? Do they finally understand the real-life effects that years and years of budget cuts and freezes have had at our hospitals and have on people like David and Kristen?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: When it comes to a situation like this, as I mentioned, the hospital and the insurance company—all of us—can do better in coordinating that care. That includes the NDP, Madam Speaker, who are once again putting politics over patients.

Yesterday, as soon as my office heard about the situation from the media, we were on the phone working with the LHIN and local hospitals to find a bed. This was

all triggered by the Hamilton Spectator asking, following a media release by the third party. Until that point, the ministry and the LHIN were unaware of the situation.

The leader of the NDP had the opportunity to plan an event, pull out of question period and make a statement in Hamilton, all before she could notify us and ask for help and allow us to help. Four hours after her press conference, my office finally received an email from her asking what we could do to assist this family. Hamilton Health Sciences received a similar contact even later in the day from the member opposite.

As I mentioned, my staff confirmed that over 140 ICU beds were open across this province, including 10 in that LHIN.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Madam Speaker, I have to say, I am shocked that the Minister of Health thinks that I, the leader of the third party, need to do his job for him. That is ridiculous, Speaker. That is ridiculous.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): It's never too early to warn somebody.

I return to the leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Look, Speaker, this minister acknowledges that his ministry has a lack of coordination with their LHIN. I got a desperate call from constituents in my riding, and I proudly did my job and went to bat for them.

And do you know what? This overcrowding crisis is not just about this particular situation. There are problems rife in our system. Danny Marchand is a Londoner, and he was badly injured in a downhill skiing accident in Collingwood this month. He spent 11 days waiting in the hospital in Collingwood before a bed opened up in London so that he could be transferred home—11 days in pain.

The question is, why have the Liberals allowed this crisis to go on?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: What I find remarkable is she is the local MPP, but instead of contacting my ministry or my office—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order. Okay, I'm going to start warning people. Minister Sousa, first time.

I recognize the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: A party that closed 9,645 hospital beds, a party that closed 24% of all the acute beds in this province, is not going to give me lessons on how to place a patient in this province. We are now working as hard as humanly possible to ensure that this family is able to avail themselves of the health services, no thanks to that third party.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Order.

I recognize the leader of the third party.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm glad the Minister of Health again acknowledged the Liberal that was at the helm back in those days.

My next question is for the Acting Premier.

Yesterday, the MPP for Nickel Belt told this House about Leo, an elderly man in Sudbury who spent 13 days receiving his medical care in a bathroom at Health Sciences North. His pillow was beside a toilet, Speaker.

The Premier and her Liberal government have had nearly 15 years to fix the problems in our hospitals, and instead, they have made them worse. Why is this Liberal government ignoring the crisis that they've helped create in our hospital system?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Madam Speaker, we know that many of our hospitals have had capacity challenges over the last number of months. We have worked hard to make sure that they have the resources they require to continue to provide that highest quality of care.

Every single outcome that we're measuring in terms of health outcomes for patients is either sustained or has improved over the past years under this government. In the case of Health Sciences North, we increased their budget by \$6 million last year. We provided them with more than a dozen additional acute care beds last fall, which was part of 1,200—the equivalent of six community hospitals—1,200 new acute care beds that were provided right across this province at an investment of \$100 million.

We've just recently renewed that investment, almost doubling it into the next fiscal year, to ensure that those capacity challenges are adequately addressed.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return back to the leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Only an out-of-touch Liberal can call somebody having their pillow beside a toilet an improvement in our hospital system.

The last Conservative government fired 6,000 nurses and they closed 28 hospitals. This Liberal government has had 15 years—15 years—to fix the problems, but instead, they have followed down the same path with more hospital cuts and budget freezes. Now, conveniently, right before an election, they're saying that they've been investing in hospitals all along. This is what makes people extremely cynical about politics, Speaker.

Why are the Liberals more concerned about their own electoral chances in this upcoming election than they are about the well-being of Ontarians?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: That party removed 230 drugs from the formulary when they were in power. They closed 24% of the acute care beds in this province. They closed 13% of the mental health beds in the province. They closed 9,645 beds altogether. They delisted home care. In their last budget, they reduced hospital funding by 1%.

I know the leader of the third party would love to blame this on someone who was in the NDP with a

cabinet, with a full government, suggesting that that leader now is a Liberal. If that's the best she can do to defend their record from the 1990s, I think it's extraordinary.

When we look at every single outcome that is important to Ontarians, we know that over the past decade plus, those outcomes have improved. That is what's important to Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, the truth hurts, Speaker. The truth hurts.

Kristen and David Ronald, Leo, Danny Marchand and all of the other patients and families who have shared how the hospital overcrowding and hallway medicine crisis has affected their lives deserve better. They deserve better than a government that cuts the services that we all count on.

When will this Premier and her Liberal government wake up to the fact that people can see through their political tricks, and finally understand that hospital overcrowding is a matter of life and death?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: That's why we invested half a billion dollars in our hospitals last year and half a billion dollars the previous year.

When we look at outcomes—mortality rates, cancer outcomes, avoidable deaths from health outcomes—compared to all other provinces, compared to other developed countries, Ontario outperforms all other provinces and is close to the top of the OECD.

The rate of potential years of life lost has improved by 18% between 2003 and 2013. We have the lowest rate of potential years of life lost in the entire country.

We have the best five-year survival rates for prostate, breast, colorectal and lung cancers in Canada, and our mortality rate is among the best in the world. We have the second-best survival rate for breast cancer in the OECD, and the list goes on and on.

We have the shortest wait times across the board of any province or territory in this country. We are one of only two provinces to actually improve our wait times from 2016 to 2017. We have the shortest wait times from GP to specialist, the shortest wait times from specialist to treatment, the shortest wait times for CT scans, MRIs, ultrasounds, radiation oncology, general surgery, gynecological procedures, and the list—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you.

1110

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Madam Speaker, the issue with Mr. Ronald in Hamilton isn't a one-off. Two weeks ago, I dealt with a Mr. Claire Sceli from London, who was stuck in the Dominican Republic, bleeding internally. The country had run out of blood, yet he wasn't allowed to return to Ontario for treatment. He was stuck because of a catchment issue. It took my office two days of intervening to

find a bed space for this man. But it was in fact this government's policy of restricting patients to their catchment area of Ontario that restricted him from receiving the care in this province. It was government policy that was interfering with this man returning home.

In fact, that this patient had to call their MPP or the ministry to actually get health care is wrong in this province. We have a health care system that should be responsive to the people where they live so they don't have to depend on or go back to the politicians.

Madam Speaker, I ask the minister this: He has risked the lives, through his policy, of Ontarians who have to seek emergency medical treatment and return to Ontario. Does he think the Ministry of Health has the correct policy in place today?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you to the member opposite for giving me the opportunity to explain what the policy is. There is no restriction with regard to any Ontarian here or abroad if they're a resident of this province, if they have health insurance. There is absolutely no restriction to any access to health services anywhere in the province. To do otherwise is illegal. The policy is very, very clear.

When a patient is out of country, first of all, it's critically important that they have travel insurance. But when an emergency does take place, what is required of the insurance company is that they contact a doctor here in this province, and that doctor then works to provide the plan of care for that specific patient. It's critically important. Often, I can say with experience, that connection either isn't made or it's not strong enough. It's critically important that that insurer take on the responsibility that they have, and that the local doctor, as well, harness the resources to provide that care.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return back to the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Perhaps the minister needs to look at his policies of the Ministry of Health. In fact, they are limited to catchment areas.

Madam Speaker, look no further than the fact that the government has created this problem because they froze hospital budgets. They've cut nursing positions. In fact, what they've done is overburdened our health care system.

This government refused to take meaningful action, which has not only overcrowded our health care system but has strained resources, leading to violence in our health care system. I think we can speak to all the RNs who are here today. Sometime during their job over the last few years, they've experienced an increase in violence at their workplace.

My question to the minister: You failed at delivering health care to those Ontarians travelling abroad. Now you're failing in providing a safe working environment for RNs. Will the minister commit to providing a safe working environment for the RNs throughout our province?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Of course I will. In fact, we have set up a table, which is jointly chaired by the Minister of Labour and myself, that contains experts, associations

and front-line health care workers and that is working specifically on this issue to reduce and eradicate violence against all health care workers across the health care system.

But I find it extraordinary that the member opposite is talking about nurses at all. When they were in power—in fact, even just between 1995 and 1998, in three short years, they fired 6,279 nurses, apart from closing 10,000 hospital beds.

Since we came into government in 2003, more than 30,000 more nurses have begun working in this province. That's an increase of 27%. In fact, the number of nurses employed in nursing in Ontario has now increased for the 13th year. There are 1,200 more nurses employed in this province, compared to just last year.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Acting Premier. In December, this Liberal government made a secretive, backdoor decision to cut the amount of emergency leave days available to automotive workers under the Employment Standards Act. Since then, I have had countless conversations with my constituents, who are outraged that the Liberal government would single them out in this way. I now have almost 1,500 signatures on a petition from workers and their families opposed to this cutback—and that's in addition to the thousands of signatures collected by Unifor.

Auto workers are hard-working people, balancing physically strenuous jobs with the demands of raising a family. They deserve the same rights and protections as every other worker in Ontario.

Will the Premier listen to these 1,500 Ontarians and countless others and immediately remove this unfair regulation?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the honourable member for the question.

Speaker, we've consulted with industry. We've consulted with stakeholders. We've consulted with labour. We've put in place a personal emergency leave project in the auto sector specifically. What it required was that auto sector employers with more than 50 employees provide each employee up to seven personal emergency leave days, as well as unlimited time off for the death of a family member—and that's on each occasion, on the passing of loved ones. It was a specific recommendation of the advisers from the Changing Workplaces Review.

What happened on January 1 of this year? All Ontarians now are covered for personal emergency leave and for sick time in the province of Ontario. Prior to that, it only applied to companies greater than 50.

I'll expand on it in the supplementary.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member from Windsor West.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Back to the Acting Premier: 1,500 signatures were collected in a week from my constituents and tens of thousands more across the

province. You clearly didn't consult with those auto workers.

The cavalier responses we keep getting on this issue from this Liberal government show just how out of touch they really are. When we asked about this regulation back in December, we were told that emergency and bereavement leave for auto workers is a regulatory burden that is getting in the way of businesses.

When challenged in a town hall in Windsor last week, the Premier said this was about fair workplaces, and told workers not to worry because the vast majority of auto workers are unionized. But she knows that is not always the case.

It's not just workers who assemble vehicles that are impacted. I've had calls from my constituents who work at paint, plastic and parts suppliers who don't have the same benefits as workers at the assembly plants—and they now have even less protection under the ESA.

I ask again: Will the Premier truly commit to fair workplaces and immediately remove this unfair regulation?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Let me reiterate—and thank you to the member for this question. We're paying as much attention to this as we possibly can, and we get the same input as the third party gets.

What we did on January 1, for the first time in the history of the province of Ontario: All employers in the auto sector are required to make personal emergency leave available to every employee who works in that sector. That wasn't the case before. Companies under 50 were excluded from this.

This has a pilot project status. The adviser asked us to put it in place, to see how it works, to get feedback through consultations. It's still in a pilot project phase. We're corresponding with the same folks the third party is. We're determined to make this fairer. We're determined to keep Ontario's auto sector competitive.

If I can close and just say, as the labour reforms roll out, we're going to continue the dialogue with the stakeholders, with the employers and with the employees in this regard, to make sure we come to the right resolution.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Last year, our government passed the Anti-Human Trafficking Act, which proclaimed February 22 as Human Trafficking Awareness Day. As you've heard, that means today is Ontario's first-ever Human Trafficking Awareness Day, a day to better educate members of the public about human trafficking and ensure that people who require services and supports know how to access them.

Sadly, we know that our province is a major centre for human trafficking, with approximately 65% of all cases in Canada taking place in Ontario. Our government and organizations across the province, like Guelph-

Wellington Women in Crisis, work tirelessly to educate our communities and support survivors of human trafficking.

1120

Can the minister please tell the House more about Human Trafficking Awareness Day?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and to the member from Guelph for the question and her ongoing advocacy with respect to this issue. Our government is committed to protecting and supporting survivors of human trafficking, and we are working hard to prevent this heinous crime in the future.

Today, on Ontario's first-ever Human Trafficking Awareness Day, we are proud to launch our official human trafficking awareness campaign. Raising awareness is of the utmost importance, as human trafficking is a crime that is often hidden and vastly underreported. It is crucial for everybody, especially young people, to learn what human trafficking is and know what services and supports are available.

Today, we are excited to announce Ontario's new, dedicated, confidential human trafficking helpline. This helpline will allow people to get information about local human trafficking supports and services available across Ontario. Together, with our community partners, we're using #KnowHumanTrafficking to raise awareness of specific signs, risk factors and facts about human trafficking.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from Guelph.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Yes, thank you, Minister. It's remarkable how far we've come in our effort to end human trafficking. Since our investment of \$72 million through the anti-human trafficking strategy and our recent funding of \$19 million to agencies across the province, a woman seeking supportive services has more options than ever before.

When a girl from Kenora, Toronto or Windsor is looking for counselling services, therapy or a place to stay, we have taken action. When a woman needs help getting herself out of the vicious cycle of human trafficking, she can rely on the victim crisis assistance program. Survivors now have immediate access to tattoo removal, replacement of government documents and recovery in a trauma-informed facility, through the Victim Quick Response Program. The Attorney General has created a new provincial human trafficking prosecution team with specialized crowns.

But there's more to do. Can the Minister of the Status of Women please tell us more about the government's long-term strategy to prevent and address human trafficking?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: To the Minister of the Status of Women.

Hon. Harinder Malhi: I'm pleased to rise today as the minister responsible for the status of women to recognize February 22 as the annual Human Trafficking Awareness Day. Today is a day to speak up and raise awareness of the exploitation faced by young women and girls in Ontario today and every day.

It's also a day to recognize what's at stake for women and girls in this province, because we must continue to fight the fight against human trafficking. We must bring human traffickers to justice, and that requires a long-term strategy and action, action that this government is wholeheartedly committed to today and in the future. We cannot risk losing these justice sector initiatives. We cannot risk not improving survivors' access to community services and supports. What we cannot risk is billions of dollars in cuts.

Our government has accomplished so much in two years, and it's making a difference in the lives of women and girls in communities throughout Ontario. We must continue to pour our hard work and effort into ensuring that everyone can live safely in this province.

OPIOID ABUSE

Mr. Ross Romano: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: Recently, a W5 documentary aired which expanded upon what I and many others already knew about the present state of the opioid crisis in Sault Ste. Marie.

Statistics reveal that there are five overdoses per day within my community. In many circumstances, the concentration of the opiates within the street drugs being ingested is unknown. The crisis has already claimed the lives of way too many people, and with inadequate resources to address the current demand for services, the problem is getting much, much worse.

This crisis cannot be ignored. Sault Ste. Marie needs financial support to help us prevent and treat those suffering from addiction from the inherent risks of opioid use.

My question is: Will this government please provide us with the financial support that we desperately need, so that we can at least have a chance of preventing further loss of life within my community?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I genuinely appreciate the question from the member opposite, representing the Soo area. As we both know—I think we all know—this opioid crisis in Canada, in North America and many parts of the world has truly shocked all of us with regard to its gravity and the innocent, vulnerable lives lost, including in Sault Ste. Marie and the surrounding region.

We have invested, over a three-year period, more than \$200 million at every level and every aspect of this crisis so that we can reduce those needless and preventable deaths and eventually provide the necessary supports for all those who are faced with opioid addiction.

I'm happy to speak in the supplementary in more detail with respect to the specifics.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member for Sault Ste. Marie.

Mr. Ross Romano: Madam Speaker, to the Minister of Finance: The frequency and impact of addictions is much more acute in Algoma than it is anywhere else—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): No, no. The rule is that you have to return back to the Minister of Health with the question.

Mr. Ross Romano: The frequency and impact of addictions in Algoma is much more acute than anywhere else in the north. Inadequate resources have caused this burden to shift to our emergency department. For every 100 patients, 59.4 are opiate-related, and 41.9 result in hospitalization; 12.2 result in death. Without help, these numbers are expected to grow by 58% within the next three years.

Prior to the documentary, I had the opportunity to discuss a solution to this problem with the CEO of our local hospital. A solution would be to bring all services under one roof within the community to create a level 3 regional withdrawal management services building. The total cost of this project would be \$11 million.

My question is: Will the minister find this money within the government's 2018 budget so that Sault Ste. Marie can have a chance of preventing the escalation of the crisis that is costing the lives of many people within my community?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Once any proposal is received, I'm happy to review it and give it the most serious consideration.

We are expanding services across the province. In Sault Ste. Marie, for example:

- \$200,000 for Sault Area Hospital to create a RAAM clinic, a rapid-access addiction medicine clinic, in the Algoma sub-region, a clinic that is actually going to serve as a hub providing supports via the Ontario Telemedicine Network to the sub-region communities;

- \$130,000 for Sault Area Hospital to modernize withdrawal management programs, to provide 24-hour support and a pathway to the RAAM;

- \$245,000 to North Bay Regional Health Centre to create a RAAM clinic in the Nipissing/Timiskaming sub-region, a clinic that will serve as a virtual hub to provide supports, again, to the surrounding communities;

- \$85,000 to North Bay Recovery Home to modernize withdrawal management programs in the five sub-regions;

- more than \$400,000 to South Cochrane Addiction Services to create a RAAM clinic in the Cochrane sub-region; and

- \$400,000 to Health Sciences North to enhance their RAAM clinic.

Madam Speaker, these are some of the investments that are so badly needed, investments that we are making, part of that \$222 million, which is the largest spend in this province's history by far, specifically to reduce the impact of the crisis and eventually prevent any of those needless deaths.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Minister of Finance. This morning I invited Annie Scott and her family to Queen's Park to present the concerns of 40 property owners in Schreiber. These residents have seen MPAC assessments skyrocket by an average of 250%, with no explanations, compared to the provincial average increase of only 20%.

Mrs. Scott's house has been assessed at almost \$100,000 more than another nearby house twice its size. She says she can no longer afford to live in her home, but no one will buy her home because of the high taxes.

Does the minister understand that the MPAC assessment process is flawed, and will he commit to changing that process?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question from the member representing Annie Scott and her son, Keith Scott, as well as her daughter. I appreciate and recognize the concerns that they have. We have a property on Walker Lake in Schreiber assessed by MPAC, as was proposed through the provincial land act, so that we could provide fair assessments, recognizing that it's done in association with the municipalities and AMO, who are also on the MPAC board.

More importantly, this family and their neighbours are assessed in comparison to some of the values of sales that have happened in their respective areas. But when you look at the unincorporated areas and elsewhere within the region, they are higher-valued.

They have a right to be concerned in terms of what is taking place. We are working with them. I know they have met with MPAC and some of the officials to try to find a resolution. I know there's an appeal process, which wasn't initiated by them at the time but is still available to them to try to foster reductions.

1130

I'll answer more in regard to my discussions with the municipality in this regard.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again to the minister: In 2016, farm assessments on Manitoulin Island doubled with no explanation. I can promise you that the income from these farms did not double, Mr. Minister. As speculators play havoc with Ontario's real estate market, MPAC assessments have become more arbitrary, inconsistent and unfair. As the Auditor General revealed in her most recent report, property owners can't count on the Assessment Review Board to treat them fairly.

Families like the Scotts have asked the Premier for help, but she has done nothing. When will the Premier fix the MPAC assessment process?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Again, the issue is one that needs to be resolved in respect to this specific issue with this specific family and their neighbours in that respective area.

As noted, the municipality has been engaged. I have met with them in regard to this. I know our officials have had numerous discussions with Schreiber and with some of the members, who recognize that in order for us to alleviate some of their concerns, there is mitigation that's available by Schreiber themselves and the municipality who has control over the mill rates that actually does the taxation to foster some supports in regard to this.

There's also the appeal process. While it wasn't used and they didn't take advantage of that opportunity in 2017, we do still have an extension to enable them to

foster that appeal. But the municipality has tools available to them to mitigate some of these costs. They have the ability to target some of these respective issues, and they are the ones taxing.

Unfortunately, Schreiber is, in fact, taxed at a higher rate than some of the other municipalities. We recognize and do feel for this family, who are obviously in a situation where their assessments have gone up because of valuations, and as a consequence, their taxes are going up. We have ways to mitigate that, and we should foster and support them in that regard.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour le ministre du Commerce international, the Honourable Michael Chan.

My question is about NAFTA. Minister, as you will know, in the United States of today, given the random acts of policy-making there, there's a lot of uncertainty around the North American Free Trade Agreement. Of particular concern is how Ontario's economy will be materially affected by these cross-border trade negotiations. I've met, for example, with stakeholders in my own riding of Etobicoke North who are wondering what the effect will be on their businesses, their workers and their families.

Ontario understands the key importance of free trade relationships, with the United States of America in particular. With NAFTA, unfortunately, the uncertainty will potentially negatively affect areas such as Windsor and Hamilton and, indeed, many different areas across the province. Therefore, it's particularly important for Ontario to be actively engaged so that our interests can be represented and preserved and they will prosper.

My question is this: Can the minister please tell me what steps we, as a government, are taking to ensure that we will be standing up for Ontario's workers and businesses during these negotiations?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from Etobicoke North for asking.

Madam Speaker, we all know that NAFTA is very important to Ontario, to Ontarians and to Ontario jobs. I know that people in this province are feeling uncertain as negotiations continue, and this government is prepared for all outcomes.

Our government is being proactive. The Premier, as you know, has met over 30 US governors. I, myself, have met with many US legislators, senators and other officials. In these meetings, we discuss our trade interdependence, which supports millions of jobs across North America and mutually strengthens our trade and investment.

Additionally, myself, along with Ministers Leal and Del Duca, attended the last round of negotiations in Montreal—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. I return back to the member for Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I would like to thank the Minister of International Trade for his dedication and also his criss-crossing the globe in Ontario's interests.

I appreciate, Minister, as you've just outlined, that our government takes the concerns over NAFTA very, very seriously. We know, for example, that Ontario is the economic driver of Canada. We must stand by our businesses and workers and their families, who have always been a pillar of our province's growth and prosperity.

In particular, a shining light in the Ontario economic sector is the auto sector. Here in Ontario, for example, the auto sector directly employs over 100,000 people and indirectly employs hundreds of thousands more.

Minister, you, along with colleagues of our government, were recently in NAFTA negotiations in Montreal. I realize that you are a strong representative for Ontario's auto sector. I would ask you, would you please elaborate for this chamber on the negotiations concerning this important facet of Ontario's economy?

Hon. Michael Chan: To the minister responsible for economic development and growth.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to thank the member from Etobicoke North for his question, and I thank my colleague the Minister of International Trade for the extraordinary work that he's doing on behalf of our province and our province's economy.

The member from Etobicoke North is correct: While I, the Minister of International Trade and the Minister of Agriculture were at the NAFTA negotiations in Montreal, there was a large portion of the discussion that took place relating to Ontario's auto sector. We know that the auto sector in North America succeeds when all states and provinces and all three NAFTA countries work together.

It's crucially important to not forget that we are important to the US auto sector as well. We made sure that this message was not forgotten. For example, our automotive supply chain is extremely integrated with Michigan, Ohio, Indiana and many other US states. On average, a vehicle will cross the US-Ontario border seven times before it finally rolls off the production line. Nine million US jobs are supported by trade between the US and Ontario and, of course, the rest of Canada.

Our government will always stand up for the auto industry. We have shown this commitment time and time again. When the auto sector needed our help during the recession, not everyone in this place chose to support them, but our government certainly did.

We will continue to fight for our businesses and we will continue to fight for our workers, because this government is on the side of all Ontarians. I look forward to having the opportunity over the next number of days, with my colleagues, to continue to stand up for Ontario.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Attorney General. This year, the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects celebrates its 50th anniversary. I'm delighted

to see a strong showing from Ontario's 1,700 landscape architects in the Legislature today.

I know they've been working over the last few years to build a case for the same regulatory status as architects and other professionals. I understand that the Attorney General has advised the profession to work within their current title act rather than offer the public stronger protection with a practice act. I further understand that there is significant public harm that could be done if action isn't taken in this regard.

I ask, will the minister take a second look at this important public safety issue, or could he at least advise this House what analysis his ministry did to really show the profession that the ministry took the request seriously?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member opposite for this question.

I would first like to say we greatly value the contributions that landscape architects make in our province. Landscape architects use specialized, technical and related training for grading, stormwater control, erosion control and other matters to help reduce physical safety risks in public spaces. Their work is vital to building Ontario up.

I would also like to offer my own personal congratulations, as well as congratulations on behalf of our government and Premier, to the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects for celebrating their 50th anniversary this year. This is a truly remarkable landmark. I was pleased to speak at the OALA AGM last year in Ottawa and look forward to continuing to build our relationship together.

I would also especially like to thank Ms. Aina Budrevics, executive director of OALA, who is here with us today, for her continued hard work on the advancement of the profession.

I believe that OALA has met with other title-protected professions as well and has had productive conversations about the continued development—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. Thank you.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I'll add more in the supplementary.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return back to the member for Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the Attorney General: Certainly, we understand, Minister, that, as you said, you advised the landscape architects to meet with the chartered professional accountants to be shown how landscape architects could make their current act achieve the same objectives.

With issues like street safety, flooding and climate change impacted by this matter, would now not be the time to take another look at the issue? That's what I'm asking on behalf of the association. Is the minister not aware that the profession is growing at twice the speed of traditional architecture and needs the government's support for a practice act? Minister, will you revisit this issue?

1140

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the OALA for the work that it does and for the very productive conversations that my ministry staff and my office staff had with the association.

Speaker, as the member opposite said, the association did submit materials for us to support their case when it comes to full practice protection. The documents, in our view, did not provide systemic evidence that restricting the practice of landscape architecture to members of the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects was necessary to protect the public from harm.

Protecting the public from harm is a key factor when extending a government-sanctioned professional monopoly because this type of legislation would impact the ability of some people in Ontario to make a living.

As for next steps, my ministry plans to work with OALA on reviewing their current act and assessing areas where revision and further professionalization of the work of landscape architecture is needed. In particular, we hope to work together on the association's bylaw-making powers and on enhancing their existing disciplinary process. I look forward to continuing to work with them and further exploring this issue.

LIQUOR LICENSING

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

One would think that when you have a facility that attracts 15,000 tourists a year, this government would do everything in its power to save it and keep it open for visitors. A case in point is the Canadian Club brand heritage centre in the Old Walkerville neighbourhood of Windsor. It was built in 1894. It's a magnificent structure, modelled after palaces in Italy. It has a colourful history of Prohibition, gangsters, gunshots and great Canadian whisky.

Why does this Liberal government continue to wash its hands of helping with a solution so that the doors of this superb facility can reopen to the public?

Hon. Daiene Vernile: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Again, I appreciate the member opposite's advocacy in regard to this very issue.

As noted, Beam Suntory is the one that ultimately now owns the operations of the Canadian Club brand. Hiram Walker is producing it in a separate facility, selling some of their brand through that retail operation. The member opposite recognizes the need and the desire for the community to have its heritage at the initial site so as to be able to sell and to attract tourism.

Of course, the new owners have since closed it down and have opted not to proceed. They are now trying to work alongside the municipality and this member, who has been trying hard to find a way to do this without setting a precedent that is contrary in respect to the retailing of beverage alcohol outside normal operations.

I'll respond more in the supplementary.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, any micro-distiller in Ontario can sell its product on-site. Canadian Club whisky has been made in this distillery for more than 100 years. Why can't the Liberals cut the red tape, modernize Ontario's regulations and allow Canadian Club whisky to be sold where it's made—in Walkerville, Ontario—and bring back those 15,000 tourists who want to see the facility each year and maybe, just maybe, buy a bottle of Canadian Club on their way out the door?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I understand the member opposite's concern. We recognize that there is the ability to retail some of these products at those micro-breweries and at some of the other sites where they produce them. The problem is, it's not being produced in the specific site that's being requested. We're trying to foster a way to find how we can engage in that ability without contravening the very issues that we put in place to protect the distillers and the industry in terms of retailing these operations.

There's more here, and that's about tourism and about the cultural aspect and the historical significance of the site. I agree with this member: We've got to find a way to make this work.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Deborah Matthews: My question is for the Minister of Transportation.

Speaker, for almost 15 years I've been very proud to represent a riding in southwestern Ontario. My city of London is the economic hub of this extraordinary region, with Western University, Fanshawe College, financial institutions, a robust manufacturing sector, a growing high-tech industry and a booming agri-food sector.

Speaker, we need to make sure that we are keeping up. That's why I am so proud to unequivocally stand in support of high-speed rail to London and beyond. Minister, would you please provide the members of this House with an update on what we're doing on high-speed rail?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: I want to thank the member for London North Centre for her question and for all of her hard work on behalf of our region. We've been actively moving forward on high-speed rail. Since announcing the initial \$15 million for a comprehensive environmental assessment back in May 2016, our government has issued a request for bids for the EA terms of reference for the new portion of the corridor that is between Kitchener and London. We have announced our plan to create a high-speed rail planning advisory board.

Just last week, I announced that David Collenette, our former special adviser for HSR, will lead the board. Mr. Collenette brings the experience that we need for the next phase of this project. Together with Mr. Collenette's team, we'll continue to move forward on bringing high-speed rail to communities across southwestern Ontario.

But the PCs—with billions and billions of dollars of undisclosed cuts in their platform, we know that high-speed rail would be off the table.

VISITORS

Mr. Joe Dickson: I really wish to welcome to Queen's Park this morning a very special nurse from Ajax, Sepelene Deonarine. Sepelene is here today as part of the 18th annual Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario's Queen's Park day.

Also, at the same time, I want to welcome this morning the executive director of SafeHope Home in Durham region, Larry Shanks, who is here today to take part in the Queen's Park Human Trafficking Awareness Day in room 247.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure this morning to again welcome to Queen's Park two wonderful nurses from the great riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex. I'd like to introduce Anita Purdy and Betty Oldershaw, who are doing a fabulous job on behalf of the RNAO back in my riding.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I know I introduced a list of nurses. I forgot the most important ones, the ones from Sudbury: David Groulx, Paul-André Gauthier, Maria Casas and Debra Anderson. Sorry I forgot you guys.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would also like to recognize the wonderful nurses who are here from Hamilton, representing the RNAO today. We have Irene Molenaar, Nilou Biganian and Bahar Karimi. Thank you so much for joining us at Queen's Park today.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to welcome Akuah Frempong and Brenda Hutton, two wonderful nurses from London, whom I had the privilege of meeting this morning for breakfast as part of RNAO Queen's Park on the Road.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I too would like to welcome some guests to Queen's Park from my riding of Beaches–East York. Doris Grinspun is a constituent. We welcome all the nurses. I know that there are six nurses from Beaches–East York whom I couldn't meet with this morning because I had a conflict, but I welcome them here as well.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I had meetings this morning; I didn't make it to the nurses' breakfast. Just in case there's anyone here from Windsor and Essex county, welcome to Queen's Park.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Seeing there are no deferred votes, the House will be recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1148 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Michael Mantha: Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I stand here and introduce page Asia Boston. She's daughter to Nicki and D.J. Boston. Her grandparents and family are all from the area of Echo Bay and Desbarats. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I wish to introduce Liam McCreery. He's the brother to Jacob McCreery. I introduced the whole family this morning, but I didn't know Liam was here, so I decided that maybe I should introduce Liam to the Legislative Assembly this afternoon.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I'd like to give a warm welcome to all of the individuals in the members' gallery who are here today in support of my motion this afternoon. I would like to welcome Durham constituents Karen Chan, Mehemed Delibasic, Cristina Mazza, Anthony Ighomauaye and Raymond Chokelal, all members from the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, who are here today. I'd also like to welcome Howard Brown, who is from the professional engineers and represents all the professional engineers in Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I just had lunch with two young members of the young parliamentarians who are in the building today, two young people from my riding: Mira Gillis and Basel Abdulla. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It's my pleasure to welcome Corneliu Chisu in the members' gallery here. Corneliu is here for the motion this afternoon from the member from Durham, but he's also the former federal member for the riding of Pickering-Scarborough East, and I consider him a very good friend. Welcome, Mr. Chisu.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HIGHWAY ACCIDENT

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise to recognize the amazing efforts of medical staff at Collingwood General and Marine Hospital, Simcoe county paramedics, OPP officers, Clearview firefighters and everyone else involved in helping those injured in a horrific head-on collision in my riding near Stayner on February 2.

The accident involved a minivan carrying a family of eight and a tour bus filled with 45 students and teachers from Hamilton who had spent the day skiing at Blue Mountain. First responders did an amazing job, extracting the injured and preparing them to be transported to hospital.

At Collingwood General and Marine Hospital a code orange was declared. Medical staff were called in to assist with the influx of patients, many of them pediatric. Staff at the hospital had just 10 minutes' warning of notification of the accident and patients arriving. The staff at our local hospital did a terrific job, stabilizing patients coming into the emergency room and preparing those with more serious injuries to be transported to trauma hospitals.

I want to thank hospital president and CEO Norah Holder and hospital chief of staff Dr. Michael Lisi for their leadership. During this very rare code orange, hospital staff performed admirably and with amazing

professionalism. They were under a lot of pressure and delivered outstanding care.

I also want to recognize Collingwood Regional Airport for its efforts during this incident. A number of Ornge helicopters and planes were used to transport critical patients to larger trauma centres. They received support from local airport staff with flight line services and refuelling.

Great people doing great work, and we're very proud of them.

FIRST RESPONDERS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to speak today. I'd like to talk about a major issue in Niagara, and that is the EMS crisis we're facing. Let me begin by saying I have nothing but the highest respect for the EMS workers, but the issue is, no matter how hard they're working, they can't keep up with this system. The amount of calls are increasing and spreading them thin, and the majority of these calls are seniors. Perhaps even worse, when they get to the hospital, the hospital is too packed to admit the patients they're carrying.

Just yesterday we heard an awful story of a patient being forced to recover in a bathroom because it was the only open spot. I spoke with EMS in Niagara. They're telling me that sometimes they wait at the hospital for four hours.

Madam Speaker, this issue was brought before regional council, and they discussed bringing this issue to the province to ask for help. I agree with them. The province has a duty and a responsibility to ensure that the residents have access to health care, which is a right in this country. That means that our first responders need to have the support they need to do their jobs properly. Our EMS responders are working with Brock University and Niagara College to explore ways to make treating patients better.

Let's be clear: This shouldn't be on their backs. The province can and should lead on this. The province should make sure not one person in this province has to get care in a hospital washroom, hallway or broom closet. They need to make sure our EMS workers aren't overworked. Simply put, health care is a right in Ontario. That means access to health care is a right, too, and right now this government is failing to make that a priority.

INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

Mr. John Fraser: It's my pleasure to rise today and speak about International Mother Language Day, which was yesterday, February 21.

I said yesterday that I'm very fortunate to represent a riding where families from 125 countries, First Nations, Inuit and Métis have chosen to make home. They speak

90 languages. It's really quite an amazing thing when you think about that happening somewhere, in a place that's as small as a riding. It doesn't happen in very many places in the world.

As I said yesterday, we live together, we work together, our kids go to school together, we play together and we celebrate together. A day like February 21 is definitely a reason to celebrate our own mother tongues, our unique languages.

In Ottawa South, almost the second-most-prominent language is Arabic. Also, Somali is a big language. French is our second language, but if you look at the wide breadth of it—90 languages; many different dialects.

I'm very proud to say that in my office I have a great staff. My great staff serve people in English, French, Arabic, Somali and now, with the addition of our new co-op student, we serve them in Spanish as well. I'm very proud of that. I think that that's something that we should all aspire to. Let's celebrate each other's unique heritage and language. Thank you very much for your time, Madam Speaker.

TOWN OF WHITBY'S ETHNO-CULTURAL AND DIVERSITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mr. Lorne Coe: On January 15, 2018, in recognition of its ongoing efforts to promote diversity and inclusion in Whitby, the town's Ethno-cultural and Diversity Advisory Committee was presented with a provincial Champion of Diversity Award by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Speaker, the Champion of Diversity Awards were created in 2017 to recognize outstanding individuals, groups and employers who go above and beyond to help promote immigrant success, economic growth and inclusion in Ontario. Whitby's Ethno-cultural and Diversity Advisory Committee received an award in the category of inclusion and diversity for its leadership and participation in community events that help celebrate diversity.

In addition, Speaker, the committee was recognized for its new-resident bus tour and Whitby passport program, which that introduces new Canadians and residents to their neighbourhood and connects them to local businesses.

Collectively, these efforts are part of the town's commitment to being an inclusive community where all Whitby residents and newcomers feel welcomed and valued—as they should.

Congratulations to the committee members, town staff, Mayor Don Mitchell and the other members of the Whitby town council for celebrating diversity in Whitby.

EVENTS IN ALGOMA-MANITOULIN

Mr. Michael Mantha: Speaker, I have lots to say. Maple syrup season has started. I was with producers from Manitoulin, the North Shore and the Sault North

area. The Algoma and District Maple Syrup Producers Association had their first tap over at the conservation authority at the Sugar Shack in Sault Ste. Marie. It was a great day. Get out and buy your maple syrup.

There are 1,000 activities that are going on across Algoma-Manitoulin, with community carnivals, with 37 municipalities, 21 First Nations. There are tugs-of-war, plank races, nail driving, backhoe rodeos, bingo, card-board box races, saw-a-log contests, chili contests and frying pan tosses.

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I went to Whitefish River First Nation this weekend, defending my title, and I have to say, I came in second in saw-a-log, but I did come in first in a new race, which is the barefoot snow race. We ran across a soccer field back and forth. Anyway, I had this elegant stretch at the finish line, followed by a great crawl.

Also, one of the biggest events in my riding, in Elliot Lake, was the 11th annual fishing derby. I sat by my hole with my minnow, and I talked down that line, and I said, "Here, fishy, fishy, fishy." A fish heard me, and he came and bit my line, but he was too small.

Just about 10 feet away from me, Mr. Ron Nadon from Elliot Lake, a 72-year-old, won with the biggest fish—\$25,000. Congratulations, Ron. The magic question is—I asked Ron, "What are you going to do with the money?" Do you know what Ron said? "My wife will tell me."

START ME UP NIAGARA

Mr. James J. Bradley: On Saturday, February 24, Start Me Up Niagara will be holding its annual Coldest Night of the Year walk in downtown St. Catharines to raise funds to assist in providing needed services to vulnerable individuals in our city.

Start Me Up Niagara, under the capable and dedicated leadership of Susan Venditti, operates an outreach centre to serve those in Niagara who are experiencing significant life challenges, such as poverty, homelessness, unemployment, addictions and mental illness.

This wonderful organization also operates a work action centre, where eligible participants can access enhanced skills development training and business supports, using a computer learning lab and an artistic retail program. Among the services offered at the outreach centre are weekend lunches, advocacy activities, housing, employment supports and tax services.

Participants in the walk will gather at the Market Square building at 4:45 p.m. Saturday and will walk on an established route in downtown St. Catharines.

We did it last year. Last year, Start Me Up Niagara raised over \$100,000 during the 2017 Coldest Night of the Year walk. These funds help keep the doors open every day and enabled them to buy their own building in 2015 and open a second location this past summer.

Our goal in 2018 is \$100,000, and your support is needed to make this happen. This year's funds raised will be used for further building and program enhancements.

BILLY GRAHAM

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Yesterday the great Rev. Billy Graham, Christian pastor and counsellor to presidents, died at age 99, surrounded by friends and family. Rev. Graham preached to over 200 million people in 185 countries around the world during his life.

As Russell Moore, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, summed it up, Graham “preached Christ, not himself, not politics, not prosperity.” Perhaps for this reason, Americans regularly put Graham at the top of most-admired-people polls. He was an inspiration to many, including to myself.

Although Rev. Graham admitted himself that he could have done more, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. counted Graham as a close friend and ally in the US civil rights movement. On two occasions in the early 1950s in Tennessee and Mississippi, Graham is said to have literally removed racial barriers, to the point of taking down ropes, to attest to his belief in true equality.

Asked what he’d like people to say about him when he died, Graham said, “I want to hear one person say something nice about me, and that’s the Lord, when I face him. I want him to say to me, ‘Well done, thou good and faithful servant.’” Yesterday, Speaker, I believe Rev. Graham heard his maker say those words to him.

Billy once said, “Someday you will read or hear that [I] have died. ‘Don’t you believe a word of it. I shall be more alive than I am now. I will have just changed my address. I will have gone into the presence of God.’” God rest his soul.

THIRD CROSSING

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I rise today with pride to tell this House about a historic announcement made in my riding of Kingston and the Islands that will change our community for generations to come.

Last June, I was pleased to host the Minister of Transportation in Kingston to announce a provincial commitment of \$60 million for the Third Crossing over the Cataraqui River. This bridge represents a passionate story about our community and one which began 50 years ago.

Through extensive collaboration between all three levels of government, the final piece of the Third Crossing was announced by our MP for Kingston and the Islands, Mark Gerretsen, yesterday morning, for another \$60 million.

It is critical as well to pay tribute in this moment and acknowledge all of our predecessors who have weighed in on and worked on this project in the decades past. I commend the city and their planning team for their vision and their inclusive approach to this project, which will change the Google Maps footprint of our little corner of the world forever.

The Third Crossing is an incredible opportunity for Kingston. It will offer alternative routes for commuters, create jobs, alleviate traffic congestion, increase safety

for emergency responders and lead to greater economic prosperity.

A huge thank you goes to MP Mark Gerretsen and to the work of the government of Canada. Yesterday was an incredible moment for us all.

The Third Crossing will truly change the landscape of Kingston, and positive impacts will come forward for many years.

RACHEL FREIER

Mrs. Gila Martow: A celebrity came to Thornhill this past Monday, on Family Day, for lunch, as part of a series called In Tribute to Jewish Women. It was held at the Chabad Flamingo synagogue. They were honouring their keynote speaker, the Honourable Rachel—her nickname in Yiddish is Ruchie—Freier.

It’s an interesting story. She was born in Brooklyn. She went to a very religious Jewish high school called Bais Yaakov. She took a course in legal stenography. She married at 19 and had three sons and three daughters. She worked as a legal secretary and decided to go to law school when she was 30. She’s now a judge and the first Hasidic female Jewish judge in New York state.

It was very exciting to hear her talk and very personal to me, because she spoke about how a lot of naysayers said to her, “Why are you doing this? You’re not going to be successful. Why are you even trying?” I saw a lot of parallels from when I got involved in politics. She also spoke about how anybody she had ever helped in her non-profit work and in her legal career helped her 10 times over when she ran for office. She had to run to be a judge. Also, she’s extremely petite, Madam Speaker, and I identified with how tiny she is.

She has to sit on the bench; she’s doing night court, she’s doing criminal court—even though she applied to do civil court. She’s doing a fantastic job.

I know that her community and the community of Thornhill are very proud of her.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I beg leave to present a report on Physician Billing, section 3.11 of the 2016 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Hardeman presents the committee’s report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make brief remarks?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: As Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I’m pleased to table the committee’s report today entitled Physician Billing,

section 3.11 of the 2016 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the permanent membership of the committee at the time this report was written: Lisa MacLeod, Vice-Chair; Bob Delaney; Vic Dhillon; Han Dong; John Fraser; Percy Hatfield; Randy Hillier; and Monte Kwinter.

The committee extends its appreciation to officials from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care for their attendance at the hearings.

The committee also acknowledges the assistance provided during the hearings and report-writing deliberations by the Office of the Auditor General, the Clerk of the Committee and staff in the Legislative Research Service.

With that, Madam Chair, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Hardeman moves adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I beg leave to present a report on Large Community Hospital Operations, section 3.08 of the 2016 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Hardeman presents the committee's report and moves its adoption.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: As Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I'm pleased to table the committee's report today entitled Large Community Hospital Operations, section 3.08 of the 2016 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank France Gélinas and Jeff Yurek, who regularly served as substitute members on the committee, as well as the permanent members of the committee at the time this report was written: Lisa MacLeod, Vice-Chair; Bob Delaney; Vic Dhillon; Han Dong; John Fraser; Percy Hatfield; Randy Hillier; and Monte Kwinter.

The committee extends its appreciation to officials from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the Rouge Valley Health System, Trillium Health Partners and Windsor Regional Hospital for their attendance at the hearings.

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The committee also acknowledges the assistance provided during the hearings and report-writing deliberations by the Office of the Auditor General, the Clerk of the Committee and staff in the legislative research.

With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Hardeman moves the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ACCESS TO CONSUMER CREDIT REPORTS AND ELEVATOR AVAILABILITY ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR L'ACCÈS AU RAPPORT DE SOLVABILITÉ DU CONSOMMATEUR ET LA DISPONIBILITÉ DES ASCENSEURS

Ms. MacCharles moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 199, An Act to amend the Consumer Reporting Act and the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000 /
Projet de loi 199, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les renseignements concernant le consommateur et la Loi de 2000 sur les normes techniques et la sécurité.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I hear "carried."

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: If passed, this bill will enhance consumers' access to their credit information and provide consumers with a new ability to implement a credit freeze, which will act as an important deterrent in the fight against identity theft.

The bill will make elevator availability data more readily available so that people can make informed decisions about where they choose to live, and the bill will allow for the creation of standards of availability for elevators, including standards and timelines for the repair as well as the introduction of greater penalties and enforcement powers for the TSSA.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Hon. Harinder Malhi: I'm pleased to rise today as the Minister of the Status of Women to recognize February 22 as the first annual Human Trafficking Awareness Day. Human trafficking is a devastating crime that violates survivors' most basic human rights. It is a brutal violation that exploits men, women and children. Today is an opportunity to not only condemn, but to shine a light on the severity and prevalence of human trafficking.

Unfortunately, our province is a major centre for human trafficking. Of all of the cases reported to police

across Canada, 65% come from Ontario. Human Trafficking Awareness Day is an opportunity to highlight this crime and encourage us all to speak up and speak out against it. We know that human traffickers are preying on the most vulnerable in our society. They control, abuse and exploit others for financial gain. Survivors of human trafficking experience serious and long-term trauma.

As Minister of the Status of Women, Ontario's first stand-alone ministry dedicated to the security and empowerment of women, I can say that tackling this horrific crime is a priority. That's why, two years ago, our government launched Ontario's Strategy to End Human Trafficking, which includes an investment of up to \$72 million. The survivor-centred approach aims to prevent human trafficking by raising awareness and by holding traffickers accountable. Most importantly, this strategy ensures that the survivors have the supports and services they need to heal and rebuild their lives.

That is why, last April, our government invited front-line service providers and indigenous partners to submit applications to the new community supports fund and the indigenous-led initiatives fund. The Provincial Anti-Human Trafficking Coordination Office is working closely with the 44 organizations that are receiving approximately \$18.6 million in funding through these two funds as they roll out their projects over the next three years.

In the case of the indigenous-led initiatives fund, the services and supports are designed for and by indigenous people. We recognize the need for distinct, culturally sensitive and relevant responses to address human trafficking of indigenous people. This is why we have partnered with the Ontario Native Women's Association to establish the Indigenous Anti-Human Trafficking Liaisons Program to spread awareness in a culturally safe way.

Speaker, we know that human trafficking will not be solved overnight, but it is our duty to act decisively and effectively to protect the most vulnerable in our society from exploitation. Our 2017 provincial budget announced an investment of \$30 million over three years to expand the Survivors of Domestic Violence Portable Housing Benefit Pilot program province-wide and eventually support up to 3,000 survivor households. As part of this work, we also extended the special priority policy to include survivors of human trafficking so they have a safe place to live while they rebuild their lives. Both the expansion of the portable housing benefit program and the regulatory changes to the special priority policy will be implemented across the province by April 1, 2018.

We've also committed to specialized training. Over the past year, we've worked with crown attorneys, police, workplace health and safety inspectors and other front-line workers involved in the investigation and prosecution of these complex cases.

Our government has followed through on our commitment to establish the first-ever Anti-Human Trafficking Coordination Office in Ontario. This office continues to build on connections across law enforcement, justice,

social, health, education and child welfare sectors because ending human trafficking will take collaboration.

We're also listening to survivors. Our Human Trafficking Lived Experience Roundtable includes a diverse group of members who ensure that the voices of the survivors play a key role in Ontario's ongoing work to end human trafficking.

Together with our community and government partners, we're using our hashtag #KnowHumanTrafficking to raise awareness of specific signs, risk factors and facts about human trafficking. And I'm very pleased to announce a brand new confidential human trafficking helpline. It was actually launched today. Anyone can call 1-833-999-9211 or 1-888-340-1001 for information and support.

We've made progress. Ontario is a safer and better place for our efforts. But there's still more work to be done, and we won't stop until everyone in the province can live safely.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize a response from the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise today and thank the minister for her comments. Today is February 22, which is the inaugural Human Trafficking Awareness Day in the province of Ontario. We on the PC caucus side of the Legislature have been fighting for this day for over two years, so thank heavens it's here.

As you know, I speak about this issue daily to raise awareness about human sex trafficking. I've travelled across this province; I've spoken to many survivors who have been instrumental in training the police on what to look for. They've trained police; they've trained victim services. So today, when I heard Casandra Diamond speak at lunch about the need for this day to occur—and she is a survivor and now an advocate and a person who actually goes and rescues victims of human sex trafficking in order to make them survivors. I say to the government: This has been a long time coming. We're very happy it's here. There's so, so much more to be done.

As the police and the victims service organizations and survivors have said for years, we need help. We need coordination. We, in this province of Ontario, as we found out in the select committee, are a hub for human sex trafficking. Sixty per cent of all the cases in Canada occur in Ontario. You have the police now saying that 60% of the victims they see are under 16. This is modern-day slavery. This is child abuse. This is an offence on everyone's human rights to the worst level you've ever seen. It's growing rapidly, and not for good reasons.

The government announced today its hotline. I'm not using this as a prop, Madam Speaker, but I want to see those posters in every public washroom, in every airport and in every hotel and motel because it is about public awareness. That is the only way that we can get everyone in the province of Ontario to help us combat this horrendous crime.

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I spoke today about elementary principals telling me that they see texts on an 11-year-old's or 12-year-old's phone that say, "Come and be a model. We can get you into modelling." That's called luring, and those children will be gone, possibly in 24 hours, into a life of exploitation which they won't be able to escape, unless we have this coordinated effort.

We need more police who are trained, and more police to have resources. They want to help. They need the resources to get the officers trained and the resources to allow victim services. Giving resources to victim services—the government can speak to the dollars they've allotted to victim services, but it's not enough. It's a patchwork still. More and more needs to be done.

I speak to Bill 96, which was the Saving the Girl Next Door Act, which I introduced a couple of times in the Legislature, which has finally come through. We still have not seen all of that bill implemented. We still have not seen the tort come in so that the victims can sue the trafficker. We still have not seen the tools and protection orders given to the police so that they can help rescue these vulnerable 14-, 15- and 16-year-olds. At any age, they can use the protection order.

My friend Timea Nagy is a survivor and advocate, and she's a tireless fighter in anti-human trafficking. She put it best when she said, "When all sectors come together and work in collaboration, we will eradicate this crime indefinitely."

I say to the government that you've made baby steps. We need to have more, and collectively we have to have more. If we cannot protect our children—I tell you those statistics of the average age being 14, over 93% Canadian-born. It's happening across every corner of the province of Ontario, and the story is the same. Please help us coordinate with police, victim services and the justice system. We all have to be in this together. If we don't, we are not going to save our children, and that is a priority for any government. I say that more needs to be done.

I thank the government for the inaugural Human Trafficking Awareness Day, but there's much, much more that needs to be done.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member from Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Today is the first Human Trafficking Awareness Day, and I challenge every one of my colleagues in this Legislature to understand this issue and become a champion for our girls, and for victims and survivors of sex trafficking.

I learned about sex trafficking as a teacher of grades 7 and 8. We talk about being safe online, but we need to realize that online or offline, the dangers are as real and dark as any of us would hate to imagine. Women and girls are seen as prey, and are bought, sold, raped and trafficked every day.

Predators, pimps and gangs use our 401 corridor to traffic and travel constantly. Predators from other provinces come here because it's so easy to traffic in Ontario.

We haven't caught on or caught up with what's going on. Our courts haven't figured it out, and are tremendously adversarial. We don't focus in on trucking trafficking, and we aren't funding necessary initiatives to combat the game or support survivors. We need to have a hotel and motel strategy. Are we training the service industry to know what to look for in their places of business and know how to safely intervene or report?

Human trafficking is everywhere. Predatory gangs and groups target young girls. They will prey on the vulnerable, which can mean the young, the isolated, the addicted or the lonely—anyone they can manipulate and separate from support. It happens everywhere. Young, outgoing, friendly pimps work the local malls and schoolyards to groom and manipulate girls. They layer the manipulation and attention until they can eventually maneuver a girl into a situation where they take her over and profit from the horrible things some horrible men will always pay for.

If she is trafficked, we need to recognize it and help her. If she is stolen, we need to find her and bring her home. If we can pull her out of the system, we have to support her and help her to recover so she may one day somehow find a pathway out of the trauma. But for most of the women and kids trafficked in the shadows, there may never be help.

Every community needs to understand that trafficking isn't about someone else's community. This isn't something that happens in a lower socio-economic setting. It isn't just in the GTA. Yes, it happens in Durham. It happens up north. It happens especially in our border towns, and everywhere that connects them.

Some girls are raped as early as 5 o'clock in the morning, pimped to men who have breakfast with their families and then stop into a hotel on the way to work. Our police are seeing an increase in cases. They are making connections to missing children and trying to identify networks of gangs and pimps and understand the complexities of it.

In Durham, we have the Durham Region Human Trafficking Coalition, comprised of over 30 coalition groups, including police, victim services and support organizations. It is a very successful coalition where the focus is to support the victims and survivors in the community. Larry Shanks is chair of the coalition and is proud that SafeHope Home has recently been funded and opened.

SafeHope Home is long-term recovery housing for survivors of sex trafficking. It's the first and only of its kind in the province, and I am so grateful that it exists. However, the needs far exceed the supports available across the province. I hope that all communities will be able to have a safe home for survivors. Many women who have been trafficked are not able to find safe housing, and they die homeless. This is not acceptable in Canada. Other support organizations have applied for provincial government funding to combat or deal with the scourge of human trafficking and, sadly, I know of a

few locally that have been rejected. I applaud the unbelievably meaningful work done by our community organizations, and we all need to thank them.

Speaker, there is only one group that can stop traffickers and get our girls out of the web, and that is our police. In Durham, our human trafficking unit works tirelessly to combat human trafficking. They've done unimaginable work, and we cannot thank them enough. To the officers across the province, our municipal police as well as our OPP, thank you for doing the work that we cannot even imagine.

I've invited myself on a police ride-along to better understand. So, what about the rest of you? What is happening behind the scenes in your communities? Do you even want to know? Our police know, and they're working every day to make it safer. They are supporting victims as they go through the excruciating preliminary court process, where they have to defend themselves to an experienced attorney as they relive memories of rape and violence and trauma. Police are trying to find and save girls all the time with limited resources and a moving target. In Durham, our police work with a grant to educate our girls in high school. They help girls recognize the signs of grooming and help them protect themselves and others from the dangers of trafficking. This education is invaluable to prevent girls from getting recruited or developing false relationships with predators. But girls in grade 9 who get the education in gym class: By that age, they're already being identified as victims of human trafficking.

Parents, what are you doing to keep your kids safe? Learn how to protect them and get more involved in their lives online and offline. Know your kids and their friends and watch for signs of unhealthy relationships.

Today was the first Human Trafficking Awareness Day, but every day the awful scourge of human trafficking flourishes in this province. Thank you to our police and our partners who are doing the work to solve and save and support.

This is everywhere, in every community, and so we need to understand it and end it.

To our girls who are being exploited: You are loved. You don't deserve this. Try to get help. We will do our best to find you and support you.

PETITIONS

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's right in front of me, or it was a moment ago. It can't be far away.

"Whereas"—that's the "whereas" portion of it. Let me go to this one instead; I can't find the first one I had all set to go.

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;

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

"Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

I agree. I will sign it and give it to Elizabeth to bring to the table.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly entitled "Petition to Save Local Long-Term-Care Beds.

"Whereas seniors and their families need long-term-care beds and high-quality care in their communities; and

"Whereas Kilean Lodge, a local long-term-care home, is set to close, resulting in a devastating loss of 50 beds; and

"Whereas the government is using the upcoming closure as a reason to consider moving 50 of Kilean Lodge's beds out of our area; and

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"Whereas 26,500 seniors continue to go without access to a long-term-care bed, as the wait-list hits a new record high this year and will double to 50,000 people over the next six years; and

"Whereas seniors now represent 15% of the population, up from 8% in 1971. By the time all of the baby boomers have reached 65, they will make up an estimated 25% of the population. Ontario's health, social and community human resources need to be better prepared and supported to meet the needs of our aging population.

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

"That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care be asked to reject any proposal to reduce the number of long-term-care beds in Grimsby, and to increase investment in local long-term-care facilities to accommodate our growing number of seniors and their needs."

Madam Speaker, I support this petition wholeheartedly. I will affix my signature to it and give it to page Bavan to pass along.

PESTICIDES

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to say thanks to Mr. George Kopylov from Tehkummah on Manitoulin Island, who has provided me with the following petition.

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

“That it should consider either (a) changing the body of the Pesticides Act and/or (b) the related regulations, to limit all use of pesticides by utilities only to extreme circumstances and only on noxious non-native invasive weeds or plants which are displacing native varieties and only when all other options have been eliminated (rather than pesticides being used as part of standard operating procedure to sterilize regrowth on land on their rights-of-way as a means of reducing labour costs); and (c) consider partially restoring to individual municipalities (lower or upper levels) the authority to determine when and where utilities may use listed pesticides in these extreme circumstances within their jurisdictions.”

I agree with this petition, affix my signature and give it to page Manas to bring to the Clerks’ table.

INJURED WORKERS

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

“Whereas about 200,000 to 300,000 people in Ontario are injured on the job every year;

“Whereas over a century ago, workers in Ontario who were injured on the job gave up the right to sue their employers, in exchange for a system that would provide them with just compensation;

“Whereas decades of cost-cutting have pushed injured workers into poverty and onto publicly funded social assistance programs, and have gradually curtailed the rights of injured workers;

“Whereas injured workers have the right to quality and timely medical care, compensation for lost wages, and protection from discrimination;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to change the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to accomplish the following for injured workers in Ontario:

“Eliminate the practice of ‘deeming’ or ‘determining,’ which bases compensation on phantom jobs that injured workers do not actually have;

“Ensure that the WSIB prioritizes and respects the medical opinions of the health care providers who treat the injured worker directly;

“Prevent compensation from being reduced or denied based on ‘pre-existing conditions’ that never affected the worker’s ability to function prior to the work injury.”

I fully agree. I’m going to give this to Margot to bring to the desk.

PROVINCIAL TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION DAY

Mr. Michael Mantha: This is a petition to proclaim June 21 as a statutory holiday in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario: Proclaim June 21 as a Statutory Holiday Called Provincial Day for Truth and Reconciliation in Ontario.

“Whereas June 21 is recognized as the summer solstice and holds cultural significance for many indigenous cultures; and

“Whereas in 1982, the National Indian Brotherhood (Assembly of First Nations) called for the creation of a National Aboriginal Solidarity Day to be celebrated on June 21; and

“Whereas in 1990, Québec recognized June 21 as a day to celebrate the achievements and cultures of indigenous peoples;

“Whereas in 1995, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recommended that a National First Peoples Day be designated;

“Whereas in 1996, the Governor General of Canada proclaimed June 21 as National Aboriginal Day in response to these calls;

“Whereas in 2001, Northwest Territories became the first province or territory to recognize June 21 as a statutory holiday; and

“Whereas in 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendation number 80 called on the federal government, in collaboration with aboriginal peoples, to establish a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation as a statutory holiday;

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

“To designate June 21 of each year as a legal statutory holiday to be kept and observed throughout Ontario. This day should serve to create and strengthen opportunities for reconciliation and cultural exchange among Ontarians. The day should facilitate connections between indigenous and non-indigenous Ontarians in positive and meaningful ways. This day should solidify the original intent of National Aboriginal Day as a day for Ontarians to recognize and celebrate the unique heritage, diverse cultures and outstanding contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.”

I wholeheartedly put my name to this petition and present it to page Bavan to bring it down to the Clerks’ table.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I have another petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it is entitled, “Industrial Wind Turbines.

“Whereas residents of Ontario want an immediate moratorium on all further industrial wind farm development;

“Whereas residents living in close proximity to proposed turbine locations are concerned about the impact on their health, the local environment, declining property values and the lack of local decision-making on industrial wind farm projects;

“Whereas unaffordable subsidies paid through the feed-in tariff program are causing electricity rates to skyrocket;

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

"To place a moratorium on all further industrial wind farm development, restore local decision-making, and to cancel the feed-in tariff program."

I am pleased to add my signature and support to this petition, and I will give it to page Aashaz.

INJURED WORKERS

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Further petitions? The member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

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

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas about 200,000 to 300,000 people in Ontario are injured on the job every year;

"Whereas over a century ago, workers in Ontario who were injured on the job gave up the right to sue their employers, in exchange for a system that would provide them with just compensation;

"Whereas decades of cost-cutting have pushed injured workers into poverty and onto publicly funded social assistance programs, and have gradually curtailed the rights of injured workers;

"Whereas injured workers have the right to quality and timely medical care, compensation for lost wages, and protection from discrimination;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to change the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to accomplish the following for injured workers in Ontario:

"Eliminate the practice of 'deeming' or 'determining,' which bases compensation on phantom jobs that injured workers do not actually have;

"Ensure that the WSIB prioritizes and respects the medical opinions of the health care providers who treat the injured worker directly;

"Prevent compensation from being reduced or denied based on 'pre-existing conditions' that never affected the worker's ability to function prior to the work injury."

I agree, and will sign it and give it to Heather to bring up to the desk.

LYME DISEASE

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Further petitions? The member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Same guy as a while ago.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario does not have a strategy on Lyme disease; and

"Whereas the Public Health Agency of Canada is developing an Action Plan on Lyme Disease; and

"Whereas Toronto Public Health says that transmission of the disease requires the tick to be attached for 24 hours, so early intervention and diagnosis is of primary importance; and

"Whereas a motion was introduced to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario encouraging the government to adopt a strategy on Lyme disease, while taking into

account the impact the disease has upon individuals and families in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to develop an integrated strategy on Lyme disease consistent with the action plan of the Public Health Agency of Canada, taking into account available treatments, accessibility issues and the efficacy of the currently available diagnostic mechanisms. In so doing, it should consult with representatives of the health care community and patients' groups within one year."

1350

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and hand it to page Aashaz to bring down to the Clerks' table.

HYDRO RATES

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Further petitions? The member from Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to see you in the chair.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take immediate steps to reduce the total cost of electricity paid for by Ontarians, including costs associated with power consumed, the global adjustment, delivery charges, administrative charges, tax and any other charges...."

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

ENERGY POLICIES

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Further petitions? The minister from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I will soon be a minister, I hope; but I'm just a member today.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas hydro bills in Ontario have become unaffordable for too many people;

"Whereas reducing hydro bills by up to 30% for families and businesses is an ambitious but realistic target;

"Whereas the only way to fix the hydro system is to address the root causes of high prices including privatization, excessive profit margins, oversupply, unfavourable net export practices and more;

"Whereas Ontario families should not have to pay time-of-use premiums, and those living in a rural or northern region should not have to pay higher, punitive delivery charges;

"Whereas changing the financing of private contracts and the global adjustment fails to reduce the long-term cost of hydro for families and businesses, does not fix the system and, in fact, will cost billions of dollars extra in borrowing costs;

"Whereas Hydro One can be returned to public ownership and management without increasing rates;

"Whereas returning Hydro One to public ownership would deliver over \$7 billion back to the province and the people of Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, express our support for reducing hydro bills for businesses and families by up to 30%, eliminating mandatory time-of-use, ending unfair rural delivery costs, and restoring public ownership of Hydro One."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition on behalf of the good people of Hornepayne—and when I'm minister I'm going to do that.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS

Mr. Granville Anderson: I move that, in the opinion of the House, March 1 should be declared Professional Engineers Day, to recognize the fact that Ontario is home to professional engineers and engineering graduates, who are highly skilled professionals and drivers of wealth and job creation, innovation and productivity in each of our province's most strategic sectors.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Mr. Anderson has moved private member's notice of motion number 84. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's so good to see you in the chair this afternoon.

I am pleased to rise today to move the motion that, in the opinion of the House, March 1 should be declared Professional Engineers Day, to recognize the fact that

Ontario is home to professional engineers and engineering graduates, who are highly skilled professionals and drivers of wealth and job creation, innovation and productivity in each of our province's most strategic sectors.

We have a number of engineers with us today, and I'm so honoured that they took the time out of their busy schedules to join us this afternoon.

Did you know, Madam Speaker, that Ontario is home to more than 85,000 professional engineers and nearly 250,000 engineering graduates? About 3,500 of these live in the Durham region, I do believe. These individuals are highly skilled professionals who drive the wealth and job creation in their communities and across our great province.

Engineers make important contributions to the strong and innovative ecosystem we have built over the past 15 years. Engineers support growth and productivity in all of our province's major sectors.

The people of Durham region are no strangers to the contribution engineers make to our province. Four of the major projects in this country are right in my riding of Durham—projects such as the Darlington nuclear generating station and its refurbishment, which employs over 12,500 people, and a large majority of those are engineers; the extension of the 407 to the 115; the building of bridges in the region; and the extension of GO train services to Courtice and Bowmanville. All these require engineers and their skills and ingenuity to make all of these things happen and to make our communities so prosperous.

Engineers are the driving force behind major employers in Durham like General Motors and, as I alluded to, Ontario Power Generation and the Darlington nuclear plant, to name a few. Engineering affects us.

It's one of the few professions that affects each and every one of us. Whether it's the cars on the road, whether it's the buildings, the homes, the apartment buildings, they all require engineering and ingenuity by our engineers. They are a driving force in our province and they're vital to our economic growth and stability.

Engineers in Durham also play an active role in their communities. They are vibrant and they are citizens who contribute to make our community such a great place to live.

I want to further acknowledge Durham constituents Karen Chan and Mehemed Delibasic. Karen Chan is the past president and chair of the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, OSPE. Mehemed Delibasic is the chair of the infrastructure committee.

The director of the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, Tibor Turi, is also here with us today, I hope.

In addition, I'd like to formally acknowledge individuals from the Professional Engineers of Ontario, including past president George Comrie; councillor Lola Hidalgo; Raymond Chokelal, who is a Durham constituent of mine, as well as the chair of the government liaison program for the PEO, Lake Ontario chapter;

and Jeannette Chau, who is manager of government liaison programs.

I had the opportunity a few weeks ago to attend Durham College. They were licensing new engineers, and that was done by the Ontario chapter. When you say “Ontario chapter of engineers,” it’s really the Durham chapter, but it says Ontario, so I always think it includes all of Lake Ontario, but it’s just in the Durham region.

It would be remiss of me if I didn’t acknowledge that on this side of the House we have an engineer sitting here with us. Minister Moridi, Minister of Research, Innovation and Science, is also an engineer. So they do get involved in the political process and the democratic process as well, which is wonderful to see. As I alluded to, they are involved in all facets of our society to make our country and our province such a wonderful place to live in, Madam Speaker.

1400

I am honoured to have them here and to have the minister with us today. When I have any engineering questions, I generally go to him and he usually has all the answers.

Hon. Jeff Leal: All the answers?

Mr. Granville Anderson: Yes, I know.

I’m blessed that in Durham we also have UOIT, which is fast becoming one of the greatest engineering schools in the province. We have Durham College as well. We’re producing engineers for the automotive sector; we have the GM plant right next door. We need engineers, as I alluded to, again, for the Durham nuclear facilities as well, which use a lot of engineers. They put their skills to work to make our province such a vibrant and strong place—and the community of Durham.

These individuals who are here with us today are true champions of the profession. I especially want to thank them for their advocacy on this issue.

In Ontario, we are blessed to have many organizations that support engineers, including the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, which is the formal advocacy group that supports professional engineers, as well as students and graduates of engineering programs in Ontario; the Professional Engineers Ontario, which serves as a self-regulatory body that regulates the profession and engages in professional development; and the Consulting Engineers of Ontario, which advocates for the interests of engineering consulting firms in the province. I want to thank these organizations for everything that they do to support engineers.

It is very important to me that we take time to celebrate engineering professionals. Madam Speaker, professional engineers are the people we trust to innovate, design, build and safeguard the world around us. They abide by a strict code of ethics under the Professional Engineers Act that demands fairness and loyalty, fidelity to public needs, personal honour and professional integrity, and continuous professional development.

In fact, we place our trust in engineers every single day. When we commute to work, we trust that the roads, bridges, trains and subways will get us there safely; and

when we are at home, we trust that our stoves, dishwashers and even our children’s toys are designed safely and are reliable. Engineers play quite a role in how Ontarians live, travel, learn and experience the built world. They do so while not wearing a uniform or directly interacting with people whose lives they improve. It’s easy to overlook the contribution of engineers and to take for granted that the majority of the constructed world around us is done by engineers. It just works, but that’s no accident.

From soaring towers and city grids to cars, phones and computers, the work of engineers impacts almost every part of our daily lives. Put simply, without professional engineers, Ontario’s communities, society and economy simply would not work. That’s why I feel it is very important to formally acknowledge the incredible work of these humble professionals.

March 1, 2018, is the ideal day to declare Professional Engineers Day, because it marks the beginning of National Engineering Month across Canada. Spanning a 30-day campaign, National Engineering Month in Ontario involves communities in engineering awareness activities such as skills contests, educational programs and career pathway assistance seminars to initiate a larger interest and ability to pursue engineering studies and a career as an engineer.

National Engineering Month programming specifically focuses on engaging under-represented and/or marginalized persons, such as women, low-income Canadians, First Nations communities and others, to access resources and a variety of support networks to encourage them to pursue engineering education and, ultimately, a career as an engineer.

Madam Speaker, by passing this motion today, Ontario will be the first jurisdiction in Canada to formally recognize a day for engineers. It’s long overdue and well deserved.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): I recognize the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I’m proud to rise today to speak to the motion to proclaim March 1 Professional Engineers Day—“to recognize the fact that Ontario is home to professional engineers and engineering graduates, who are highly skilled professionals and drivers of wealth and job creation, innovation and productivity in each of our province’s most strategic sectors”—on behalf of the residents of my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

I am a proud professional engineer who graduated from Queen’s University as a member of Science ’77, holder of the grease-pole record of 17 minutes—still intact today.

When I chose to enter engineering at Queen’s, I knew very little about the profession and the role of an engineer. I enjoyed math and science in high school, so engineering seemed to be a natural fit. My guidance teacher, Mr. McDougall, pointed out the area as an interest-fit and the excellent job opportunities that the engineering profession held at the time.

At university, we received our basics in physics, math and chemistry, but more importantly, the education was all about solving problems. Engineers utilize the pure sciences and turn them into practical, everyday products and services, such as cars, jet planes, cellphones, roads and bridges, and toasters, just to mention a few of the tens of thousands of products that they are responsible for the production of.

In addition to the many products engineers design and build, they are natural problem solvers. Their training at university and in the real world revolves around problem solving: the art of breaking down a problem into its component parts and providing a solution. Our professors spent long hours highlighting the need and the method of creating diagrams to illustrate the forces that act on an object.

Companies have learned as well that engineers would also make great CEOs, policy-makers, entrepreneurs and researchers. I once heard a guest speaker speak to this very issue, and that engineers should be more involved in politics and would actually make great politicians.

The world has become very complex, and governments are required to make decisions on technology that will greatly impact our standard of living and our ability to compete in this very competitive world.

I can highlight this with no better example than that of the Liberal government's Green Energy Act. In 2011, the association of professional engineers issued a report in their quarterly publication highlighting the problems with this act: how it did not consider the design of the grid and that it would not achieve the desired outcomes, possibly even causing the grid to fail.

Of course, the rest is history, as the Green Energy Act drove up the cost of electricity to a point where our manufacturers can no longer compete, forcing many of them to relocate to lower-cost jurisdictions. Our Auditor General also revealed that this government ignored reports from the engineers at the Ontario Energy Board that advised against many government policies. Just last fall, another report issued by the engineering association calculated the cost of the so-called green energy wasted in 2016 alone to be worth well over \$1 billion.

This just highlights some of the problems and hardships that can arise when governments ignore the basic laws of physics for political gain.

It's unfortunate today that so many of those whom this bill calls the "drivers of wealth and job creation, innovation, and productivity" are actually unemployed. When I graduated, our universities could not produce enough engineers to fill demand. Sadly, today, many of our graduating engineers in Ontario are either unemployed or underemployed.

We need to again get back to basing our government policy on practical science and make the tough decisions necessary to put our province back where it belongs, as the economic engine of Canada, and move it away from the have-not status that this government has put us into today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Further debate? The MPP from—

Interjection: Algoma.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): — Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I thought we were on a first-name basis now—we're getting close.

It's always a pleasure to stand in my place on behalf of the good people of Algoma–Manitoulin.

Let me start by making this opening statement. Becoming a professional engineer is a noble and incredible accomplishment. It takes years of university education, four additional years of acceptable engineering experience and the successful completion of a professional practice examination administered by Professional Engineers Ontario.

1410

Ontario is home to more than 85,000 professional engineers, highly skilled professionals who are the drivers of wealth and job creation, innovation and productivity in each of our province's most strategic sectors. Ontario's professional engineers have world-class education, skills and ethical standards that empower them as problem solvers, preventing harm, finding solutions, and creating wealth, value and jobs across our province.

Honestly, Speaker, what are we going to debate here today? We all agree that we need and we should look at promoting even more of our engineers. From my perspective, March 1 is just the simple thing that we can do. We need to recognize the great work that our engineers are doing each and every other day. Such a day could help the public understand how professional engineers contribute to society. Their important contribution helps us all in many different ways, every single day. They are an essential part of our economy and our society.

Taking the time once a year to understand and appreciate the work engineers do is a very easy gesture that we can all absolutely do. It is easy to forget how we depend on them to make sure we can continue to live our lives safely every day and how we depend on them each and every day, each and every year.

Engineers come in many different shapes and forms. In my role as critic for northern development and mines, I get to see and experience the work engineers do in a very different context. To me, it is just as incredible to see engineers work on skyscrapers as it is to see them working in mines. We need them in every corner of the province for things you don't even know you need them for yet. They create solutions, not just fixes.

Yes, we should take a day to recognize the commitment they have made with their career to solve almost impossible problems and develop technical solutions for future engineers that will continue to create and solve issues that will benefit all of our lives. Engineers are key in the development of our societies by making them simpler, safer and better.

If we want to see Ontario grow and prosper and stay ahead, it is crucial that we support engineers. More than ever, engineering is a domain that will shape our future. That is why it's important to train the best engineers here in Ontario.

The world is changing rapidly, and we need to train and support professional engineers to help us through these transitions. We need smart, creative and willing people to solve the problems of tomorrow and have our province come out on top and lead.

I hope everyone in this chamber will agree that we need to invest more in higher education as well. If we actually want to continue growing in a sustainable way, we need more problem solvers; we need more engineers.

Just like in the mining sector, I know the industry has been reinventing itself, thanks in large part to engineers who make it possible. I know the Ring of Fire represents in many ways a very interesting engineering challenge. As you all know, it represents an enormous potential for northern Ontario but also this whole province. And just like in many other major projects, engineers are always there, from the planning through to the problems that arise, that they talk about, and actually, they're there until it gets done.

The same goes for many other industries. We need to make things more affordable but safer. We need to make things go faster and bigger, but with minimal impact to the environment.

Our challenges have changed and the profession of engineering has evolved. Challenges are arising from everywhere, especially in northern Ontario. We need to find sustainable, affordable, reliable energy sources that can solve the energy crisis past governments have created and that affects the north immensely more than anywhere else. We need to find new ways to develop northern Ontario and all of its communities, while making sure we fix our aging infrastructure and mitigate our environmental impacts.

All of these things require more problem solvers—more engineers. It starts not only with recognizing the important contribution professional engineers have given to this province, but with the province investing in the incredible potential professional engineers can offer to all of us.

It's with great pride that I offer my support to this motion, long overdue—a profession that you can hold yourself with pride.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Further debate? The MPP for Kingston and the Islands.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is a pleasure to see you in that chair.

I am thrilled today to speak in favour of this motion, motion 84, brought forward by my dear friend MPP Granville Anderson, the member for Durham. I offer my full support for his motion to declare March 1 as Professional Engineers Day in Ontario.

As you may or may not know, Kingston's motto is that it's a place "Where History and Innovation Thrive." Indeed, it is a place where engineers thrive, and they have a special place in our unique history. The same can be said of engineers working in cities across our province, Canada and the world.

Like many little girls, I wanted nothing more than to be an engineer when I was growing up. The reason why I

wanted to be an engineer was because I wanted to build bridges. How ironic that today I made a statement on the bridge announcement in Kingston and the Islands, and yesterday we got federal funding announced by our MP, Mark Gerretsen, so we now have what we need to build that bridge. We will be working with many engineers in the province.

The special work being done by engineers largely takes place behind the scenes and away from the public eye. Yet the safety of so many individuals in our communities across this province depends on their diligence and hard work. This is an important motion because so often we just don't think about the work that engineers do because we depend on living in safe societies and communities. They do their jobs so well that we very rarely have an occasion to question or worry about engineering that stands beneath us and around us, that we work with in our daily lives.

Every week, I take the train from Toronto to my riding of Kingston and the Islands, and I wonder if people ever stop and think about the weight of all the people on the train, the strength of the steel, the engineering that goes into welding the joints, the thickness of the metal, and the velocity of the train. There are calculations for that. The same goes for planes, of course, except with planes, there are humans that are airborne.

Do you ever wonder about the buildings that you walk past on a daily basis? In Toronto's downtown core, there are many new buildings being built and undergoing renovations. In the latter case, they are being gutted entirely, like the building across from where my office is, the Sutton Place Hotel. Girders are being removed. Walls have been coming down for years now. You can actually see excavators and front-end loaders on those floors, working to replace that building.

There are literally thousands and thousands of important decisions that go into these projects. There are decisions that are critical and precise, and they require data that engineers work with on a daily basis. Engineers don't just wonder about such things; they live and they breathe those formulas and that data every single day.

Recognizing March 1 as Ontario engineers' day will serve as a reminder of all of the work that engineers do in our province to keep our citizens moving. It will support them—supports the citizens in our daily lives at work and at home, and it will keep each and every one of us safe.

On a societal level, engineers are critical to innovation and our economic prosperity, which has already been mentioned.

Whenever I have the opportunity, I always take time to visit Kingston's Innovation Park. I'm always amazed to see engineers from all backgrounds coming together and working in teams to solve some of our most prevalent issues in society. These issues range from health care and the environment to infrastructure, to name just a few. It's important that we recognize the important work, which is the culmination of passion, hard work and often multidisciplinary teamwork that exists between engineers and other industry professionals.

Recognizing March 1 will signal our continued support of engineers across this province and their unique place in helping each and every community thrive.

1420

Ontario is home to some of the most prestigious engineering schools in the world, and of course Queen's University is one of them. I'm very excited, and I cannot wait to see what future technologies, products and innovations our future students at Queen's University will be bringing forward in the years to come.

With that, I would like to thank MPP Granville Anderson and his team for bringing this important legislation forward. Thank you, and you can expect my utmost support for your motion.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Further debate?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to be able to speak in support of the motion from the member from Durham. It provides an opportunity to recognize the importance of professional engineers and their regulatory body, Professional Engineers Ontario, and, in particular, some of the members of the Lake Ontario chapter who are in the gallery with us today.

It also allows me to draw the House's attention to some of the constituents in Whitby–Oshawa and other parts of the region of Durham who were recently recognized by Professional Engineers Ontario's Lake Ontario chapter. I was joined by the member for Ajax and the member for Durham at the awards ceremony.

Ontario professional engineers are well educated, and prepared to apply the best up-to-date technology in an environmentally sustainable and cost-effective way. They're also responsible for safeguarding life, health and public welfare. In my riding of Whitby–Oshawa, you don't need to look very far to see examples of their contributions.

They are a regulatory body: In the same way as the College of Physicians and Surgeons regulates the medical profession, or how the Law Society of Upper Canada sets standards for lawyers, Professional Engineers Ontario fulfills the same important role for engineers. In so doing, Professional Engineers Ontario grants licences to engineers and sets standards for the practice of engineering in Ontario.

On January 27 of this year, it was my honour to attend the Professional Engineers Ontario, Lake Ontario chapter, annual general meeting and licence presentation, which recognized this year's new professional engineer licensees, who work day in and day out in the region of Durham to help keep the public safe. In achieving this designation, these licensees were required to demonstrate four years of engineering work experience, at least one of which must have been completed in a Canadian jurisdiction. They were also evaluated by Professional Engineers Ontario on five quality-based criteria, including the application of theory, practical experience, management of engineering, communication skills, and awareness of the social implications of engineering.

I hope all the members of the Legislature will join me in congratulating this year's recipients from the region of

Durham. They are Bailie Christina Paplinskie, Michael Matthew Halverson, Tsz Kin Mui, Isabel Christina De Siquera Victal and Faisal Hasan Khan. It's my sincere hope that their achievements will inspire others, particularly young students, to pursue a career in engineering, especially as Ontario faces a growing skills mismatch.

In my role as the official opposition critic, I've had the opportunity to visit a number of universities and community colleges, and a common theme I've heard is that we as a province need to do a better job of graduating students for the jobs of today and tomorrow, not the jobs of yesterday.

One concrete way that we can alleviate the growing skills mismatch is by improving the coordination between the private sector, educational institutions and government when it comes to sharing labour market information with students. Better labour market information is vital to help students determine which jobs will be in demand or what they pay, so they can consider these fields; for example, engineering. Ontario's job information portal should be more accessible, user-friendly and informative, so that it does a better job of linking students with in-demand careers.

Speaker, I would echo again my congratulations to the new professional engineer licensees under the Lake Ontario chapter of Professional Engineers Ontario. I have no doubt that Professional Engineers Ontario will remain committed to enhancing the quality of life, safety and well-being of residents in Durham region and the province of Ontario.

Once again, I'll look forward to supporting this motion and honouring professional engineers on March 1.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): I recognize the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Is there an engineer in the House? Normally, Speaker, as you know, we only have two as members: the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and the member, now sitting as a member of the Trillium Party, from Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

Ms. Deborah Matthews: Hey, Reza is an engineer, too.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Who?

Ms. Deborah Matthews: Reza Moridi.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Oh, I'm sorry. There's three. We could use three more, if they're out there anywhere. I am so sorry, sir. That iron ring on the pinky didn't come all the way over.

Speaker, there's nothing wrong with borrowing a good idea. They've had a Professional Engineers Day in the United States for a couple of years now—almost two years. The first was celebrated on August 3 in 2016. The idea in the States was the brainchild of a man by the name of Tim Austin. He's a professional engineer in Kansas and he came up with the concept while serving as president of the National Society of Professional Engineers for the term 2015-16.

That society has a core principle that its members are proud of. It reads, "Being a licensed professional engin-

eer means more than just holding a certificate and possessing technical competence. It is a commitment to hold the public health, safety, and welfare above all other considerations.”

In the United States, professional engineers have been licensed for more than 110 years, dating back to 1907. Now they celebrate on the first Wednesday in August. Here in Ontario the day would be celebrated on March 1, at the start of National Engineering Week, of which we've heard. We have something like 85,000 men and women with an iron ring on their pinky finger, designating them as engineers.

Ontario's professional engineers have been around for nearly 100 years and, Speaker, engineers do some pretty amazing things. We don't recognize their achievements as well as we should.

It's a simple thing these days just to go on the Internet and look for some of the cool things engineers are known for. They design roller coasters, skyscrapers, cars, towers, bridges, tunnels. You can't get into outer space without an engineer having something to do with the idea. If you go to the movies—go see *Black Panther*—engineers came up with all of those special effects. What would our kids and grandkids do without new toys—toys designed by engineers, and playground equipment designed and created by engineers?

These folks use their knowledge of chemistry to combine different elements in various combinations to create new foods and find ways to store food and keep it safe. We've talked in this House this week about Rowan's Law. Well, engineers are working on new designs for football and hockey helmets, let alone that they come up with new technologies and tools for surgeons, and better equipment for hospitals. They create artificial body parts and limbs, and they look for ways to protect the environment from pollution.

Of course, as we all heard here in the House last fall, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, Ms. Fife, told us that the Wynne Liberals have muzzled their ministry engineers concerned about the health of families living in Chemical Valley, near Sarnia. The member accused the government of listening to industry lobbyists instead of ministry experts. The professional engineers working for the government of Ontario let it be known that they've been warning the Liberals for years about the negative impacts of air pollution on the Aamjiwnaang First Nation near Sarnia. Poorly regulated flaring of acid gas is emitting unsafe levels of sulphur dioxide. These engineers were ordered not to say anything, which is against their code of ethics.

Speaker, I have great faith in our professional engineers. I'll mention a couple of them from my area. Hilary Payne, a former city administrator in Windsor, is now a city councillor; he's been there for a number of years, a number of terms. Andrew Dowie works for the city but he's an elected town councillor in Tecumseh. My former next-door neighbour David Holland took his engineering degree to the Royal Canadian Air Force, flies our latest fighter jets and trains new pilots on them as well. The

leader of our local society of professional engineers is Asif Khan, who works for the Fiat Chrysler automotive group. The society engages young people by holding annual competitions for young people, events such as building bridges out of Popsicle sticks. It's great training for budding future engineers.

1430

Engineers do it all, Speaker. I know you've been watching a lot of the Olympics on TV, as I have. I am suffering sleep deprivation today after the hockey game last night. Engineers invented the snowboard. They perfected modern running shoes. I know you enjoy the Ferris wheel. It's one of the most interesting engineering wonders of the world, and it was created by an engineer named Ferris way back in 1893.

You want a better TV? Well, talk to an engineer.

They can even tell you how badly the Liberals have messed up the energy file in Ontario. Just yesterday, in this House, the member from Prince Edward–Hastings, Mr. Smith, spoke about a report from the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers. He was speaking of the money lost when the Liberals sold hydro we didn't need to competitors outside of Ontario's borders. We pay a good price to generate electricity, but we overproduce and sell the excess power at a reduced rate. Mr. Smith—and he's here to tell you if I'm not speaking the truth—says the report from the engineers puts that loss to Ontario taxpayers at somewhere between \$732 million and one and a quarter billion dollars. The engineers say, “Don't sell it across the border; make it available to our own residents and manufacturers.”

Speaker, professional engineers call it as they see it. They live by their code of ethics. That's why this bill is important. And it's timely. That's why we all should be supporting it.

I thank you for your time this afternoon, for the opportunity to stand in this House on behalf of my constituents from the great riding of Windsor–Tecumseh.

I would like to say again how nice it is to see you in the chair this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Thank you. I'd just like to remind the members that when you speak about someone in the House, you use the name of their riding.

Further debate?

Mr. Han Dong: I would like to share the rest of the time with my colleague from Davenport as well as the Minister of Research and Innovation.

I am very pleased to speak to this private motion brought forward by the great member from Durham.

As the member from Kingston mentioned, just look around the downtown core—whether it's the high-rises, whether it's the UP Express which has been completed, whether it's SmartTrack, the RER stations that have been contemplated, fintech companies and clean-tech and high-tech companies and start-ups, every aspect of our daily life and our economy depends on professional engineers.

My friend from Windsor–Tecumseh is right; they have not received a fair amount of recognition by the public.

This motion will speak to that, recognizing March 1 as Professional Engineers Day. I'm fully supportive.

I also want to remind this House that Ontario is undergoing a \$190-billion public infrastructure investment for 10 years in the future. That's going to require a lot of engineers.

I had the pleasure to attend the PEO's board meeting about two years ago. I heard, loud and clear, that they asked for more students in the STEM disciplines to come out of our post-secondary institutions. That's why I'm very pleased that in the last fall economic statement the finance minister announced that Ontario will be producing 25% more post-secondary students in the STEM disciplines. That means 10,000 more post-secondary students and also 1,000 applied master's students in AI-related fields per year in the next five years.

Also, I want to remind the House that Ontario now has a Chief Scientist, who is female, which is great: Dr. Molly Shoichet. She's an engineer. She is a chemical and biomedical engineer, I believe.

This is all very good achievement by this government, and it speaks to our emphasis on supporting the STEM disciplines and that field. By recognizing Professional Engineers Day, we are taking it one step further.

I also want to talk about diversity in this industry. Recently, I looked at the board. I noticed that there's not just diversity in ethnic background, but also in gender. We're seeing more and more female professional engineers join the field, which is fantastic. We're also seeing more internationally trained professionals coming to Ontario. There is the bridge training program from the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration to help them on their accreditation.

I'm very pleased with the direction the government has taken to support the professional engineering industry.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Further debate? The MPP from Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's nice to see you in the chair today.

Today we're speaking about proclaiming March 1 Professional Engineers Day for the province of Ontario, where we have 85,000 professional engineers. We know that we all have a lot of engineers in our constituencies and we get to meet with them fairly often—because I'm sure it's no different in Thornhill than the rest of the province.

Engineers look around them and see potential problems and have lots of great suggestions to make. I know in Thornhill I hear from a lot of engineers about traffic congestion and why aren't we doing things like getting smart traffic lights to get the traffic moving; why isn't the Yonge subway getting moved along when it's been promised so many times?

In my own family my father—my late father, unfortunately, a blessed memory—Alex Gladstone, was an engineer. He taught me my physics course in high school or I probably would have failed, because the teacher quit halfway through the year. My brother David is an engin-

eer. My brother-in-law Mike is an engineer. Many of the engineers we know wear the silver ring on their pinky. Supposedly it's to remind them of a bridge that once fell down.

We meet with engineers in our constituencies, but also, we get to interact—because the Professional Engineers of Ontario have so many organizations; they call them chapters. I know the York chapter for York region this year won the government liaison program award, which was very exciting. I myself, with the member from Scarborough—Agincourt and the member from Kitchener—Waterloo—three women—received the MPP award for 2017 from the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers.

Antony Niro is a computer engineer and a professional engineer of Ontario. He is on my executive and helps out in Thornhill with our association. He helps out as well down here at Queen's Park. Last week we were actually touring the University of Waterloo, which is my alma mater. I went to optometry school there. Optometrists actually like to think of themselves as health science engineers, whether the engineers see us as that or not, because so much of what we study is optics and things like that, which I think are closely related to the field of engineering.

We toured the Waterloo Institute for Quantum Computing. It was very interesting. I think we understood a small amount of what they were trying to teach us, but we got the idea that it's hard for us to envision the world of the future, and I think that's what we count on our engineers being able to do. They know what's coming in 10, 20 and 30 years, before the rest of us quite catch on. We have to see the Internet to really believe it. But I think they're going to anticipate a lot of things, like autonomous driving cars and things like that in the future. We need them. We appreciate them.

I'm looking forward to celebrating with all of the professional engineers of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Further debate?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you for the opportunity to speak on motion 84, proposed by the member from Durham, to declare March 1 as Professional Engineers Day in Ontario.

Ontario is home to more than 80,000 professional engineers, with many of them actually living in my own riding of Davenport. Unlike many other professionals, such as doctors, nurses, police officers and teachers, the majority of Ontarians rarely interact with engineers in their daily lives, yet professional engineers are the people we trust to innovate, design, build and oversee the efficient functioning of our infrastructure.

From soaring towers and city grids to cars, phones and computers, the work of engineers impacts almost every part of our daily life. Engineers don't have a uniform, and you may not be able to pick one out of a crowd, but they are all around us: on project and conservation sites, in boardrooms, as CEOs and senior decision-makers, as educators and as leaders in our community, and even as MPPs.

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It is important we recognize the vast and significant contributions of professional engineers in Ontario. I hope this motion will encourage more young people to pursue engineering as a degree and a career.

As someone with a degree in applied chemistry and biology, I especially take this opportunity to encourage young women to pursue studies in science and engineering. We know the unquantifiable value that women add to the STEM fields. I hope this motion will serve to particularly support and recognize the women currently serving our province as professional engineers.

I encourage all of my colleagues here in the House to support this motion. I will be supporting this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Further debate?

Hon. Reza Moridi: In the 45 seconds I have, I just want to say that it's a great honour to stand in this House and support the motion put forward by my good friend and colleague the member from Durham, MPP Granville Anderson, to mark March 1 as Professional Engineers Day across our province of Ontario.

Engineers are the ones who create wealth in our society. They put science into practical use in our society. As you heard, Madam Speaker, there are 85,000 engineers serving our country of Canada and our province of Ontario. The regulatory body, Professional Engineers Ontario, has been regulating this profession for 96 years, and the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers has been advocating for the profession for 17 or 18 years.

I'm fully in support of this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): The time for debate has ended.

The member from Durham has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I would like to thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their contributions. They're too numerous to mention.

I noticed the minister had 45 seconds left. I'm sorry about that. I know you had a lot to contribute to the discussion today.

I would like to thank individuals from various engineering organizations who are here today to share their support. Thank you very much for taking the time out to be here.

As you have heard from the various members that spoke this afternoon, professional engineers deserve to be recognized for their contributions to the economy, to the growth of Ontario and, most importantly, to the safety of all our citizens. We count on them to keep us safe, whether it's those bridges, whether it's those switches that allow our train systems to operate, our subways, our GO trains and in all facets. In the nuclear industry, we rely on them so much, and we count on them to do a job which they have done day in and day out to make us all safe and to make this province such a successful place to live.

That's why it's so crucial to me that we take the time out to celebrate the engineering profession, to lend support to them today and to ensure that March 1 from now on is recognized as Professional Engineers Day.

I thank them again, once more, for all they've done for our great province. We're indebted to them.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak to this motion. I am sure it will have the support of all members of this House.

AFFORDABLE ELECTRICITY ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018

SUR L'ÉLECTRICITÉ ABORDABLE

Mr. MacLaren moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 197, An Act respecting affordable electricity /
Projet de loi 197, Loi concernant l'électricité abordable.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Today I rise to ask this House to support a bill that will ensure electricity prices are driven by the needs of the people, the families, the businesses and the economy of Ontario and not by the tacticians who control the back rooms of the political parties. As representatives of the people, we have a duty to put the rights and interests of our constituents ahead of political ideology and partisan agendas.

Madam Speaker, this Legislature is the principal institution of democracy in Ontario. We are entrusted with ensuring that the government of the day works for the citizens of Ontario. The Affordable Electricity Act will do that by making electricity prices as low as they can be by bringing as quick an end as possible to the government-imposed policies and programs that have added several billions of dollars every year to the electricity bills of the citizens of Ontario.

This bill requires the government to put the interests of electricity consumers first. It puts priority on generating electricity from the inexpensive, reliable and cost-effective hydro and nuclear power plants that the public already owns. It brings an end to policies, programs and contracts that force consumers to subsidize foreign-sourced electrical technologies that are unreliable and ridiculously expensive. It demands full transparency and the process by which electricity prices are set. It allows customers to buy electricity from suppliers who sell it at the lowest price. It lets customers buy electricity when the price is the lowest, and always at the lowest price that Ontario's electricity is being sold to customers in other provinces or in the USA.

This bill is needed because the current electricity policies have raised prices to the point where a growing number of Ontario's families are being forced to choose between paying their electricity bill or buying their food. Many businesses have been forced to close, and many of the remaining businesses feel that they can survive only if they move away from Ontario.

The current course spells disaster for Ontario. Things must change, but they will only change if this Legislature puts the interest of citizens first.

We can no longer allow political ideologies, backroom games and clever political and bureaucratic deals to displace sound planning and management of the electrical system. We must put electricity planning and pricing on a solid footing. We must put a stop to the wild ideological gambles and the hopeful technological adventurism that has caused so much harm. We must bring an end to the hidden arrangements, the deferred payments and the clever political spin. We must ensure that families and businesses in Ontario have access to electricity at an affordable price. If we don't, more families will suffer, more businesses will close, and our economy will not be able to pay for the important common services that we all need.

Madam Speaker, the current problems with electricity pricing were recognized by this Legislature more than a decade ago. In 2004, this Legislature passed a bill to avoid the growing problem. That bill required the preparation and approval of a detailed plan for electricity production, distribution and sale in Ontario to protect the interests of consumers and to put electricity planning on a solid footing for the future.

The Auditor General referred to that bill in her 2015 report on electricity power system planning. Most importantly, she noted that the government had done nothing to comply with the statutory requirements.

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In her follow-up report of 2017, the Auditor General said, "The Electricity Act ... was amended in 2004 to require the Ontario Power Authority ... to ... prepare a detailed technical plan and submit it ... for review and approval to ensure that it is prudent and cost-effective.

"However," she said, "as of our 2015 audit, no such plan had ever been approved in the previous 10 years as required by the legislation to protect consumers' interests."

Instead of complying with that law, the government embarked upon a series of policies that put ideological beliefs and partisan interests ahead of the duty to protect the interests of consumers. As a result, electricity users in Ontario have been burdened with billions of dollars of unnecessary costs on their electricity bills every year, costs that would not have been imposed if the government had complied with the law.

Electricity consumers are being forced to pay huge subsidies to domestic and foreign firms to build and operate unreliable solar and wind energy plants; to pay absurdly high prices for electricity produced by renewable electricity facilities; to curtail a significant portion of the production from publicly owned hydro and nuclear generating plants that were already producing cheap, reliable power; to pay electricity producers so that they would stop producing electricity; to buy electricity that we do not need; and to subsidize customers in the United States by selling that surplus power to them for far less than we are forced to buy it.

Madam Speaker, this Legislature did nothing when the government decided to ignore the law that was passed in 2004. It did nothing to stop government pursuing

destructive policies that undermine those legal requirements by imposing programs that add billions of dollars to current and future electricity bills, and by forcing electricity customers to pay at least \$1.3 billion to plan, build and then abandon two gas-powered electricity plants that were thrust on communities that did not want them.

The Legislature took no effective action, even when the Premier confirmed that that decision constituted a breach of trust between government and the people of Ontario, and that the public good was sacrificed to partisan interests.

In short, this Legislature allowed political ideologies, clever deception—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): If we could please come to order. Thank you.

Mr. Jack MacLaren:—and partisan protectionism to prevail over the statutes that this Legislature had imposed, and over our duty to act on behalf of the citizens of Ontario.

We are members of the Legislature of Ontario. We are the body that has the right to pass the laws that apply in this province. We don't pass laws for fun. We pass them so they will be followed—followed by citizens and followed by government.

With respect to the laws that deal with the pricing of electricity, we have allowed them to be undermined. We must do better. If we don't, we are effectively saying that the laws we make don't matter at all. We are saying that we don't act as representatives of the people. We are saying that this Legislature, the most important democratic institution in the province, is nothing but a sham.

Madam Speaker, I am asking the members of this House to support a bill that is firmly committed to putting the interests of the citizens of Ontario ahead of political ideology, partisan interests and personal gain.

This bill will allow sound and rational electricity planning to proceed. It will free electricity users in Ontario from high costs and destructive subsidies for unreliable electricity supplies. It will allow families and businesses to buy electricity at the lowest possible cost over the long term. It will support economic growth, enhance the competitiveness of Ontario's businesses and keep jobs in the province.

I ask that all members of this Legislature act on behalf of the citizens of Ontario and the economic future of the province. I ask that we all support this bill and bring it to third reading, so as to begin a process in this House that will lead to the adult conversation about electricity that has been desperately needed in Ontario for more than 15 years by the citizens of Ontario, whom we have a duty to represent, and by the businesses of this province which provide the jobs and wealth upon which our prosperity depends. I ask that we all join together to begin this essential conversation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Further debate?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It gives me great pleasure to talk about my friend's Bill 197 that's before us this afternoon.

Let me, first of all, talk about some of the initiatives he talked about. A majority of those initiatives are undertakings the government has already begun and has completed; we're going down that path.

He talks about infrastructure. The member should know that since this government's been in power, we've invested some \$70 billion to rebuild an aging infrastructure that all parties neglected. We built it and walked away from it. I'm sure the member would remember the days of brownouts and blackouts. They still happen today—the majority of them because of weather conditions that we have no control over.

The reality is that I would encourage the member, as he drives down the side roads in his riding, to see the number of new hydro poles that are up. Frankly, in the riding where I live the majority of them were leaning sideways for a number of years; in many cases they fell down.

He talks about energy prices. A year ago, a year and a half ago, I would have agreed with the member. My house is all electric so I was reminded every month of the cost of energy, Speaker. I can tell you, and I would share this—I know we're not supposed to talk about what happens in our caucus, but I think in every caucus meeting we had, or every second, I talked about my hydro bill and my neighbour's hydro bill. I think some of the members on this side of the House will remember that. We came up with a solution, while we maintain a green energy sector that's next to none; we lead in that sector.

I think the member's intentions certainly are good, but the reality is that a lot of this has already happened and we're working towards the others.

I know some of my other colleagues want to talk about this. I would just say that he certainly talked about some of those things that we need to do; some of those things have already happened or they're in the midst of happening.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to join the debate here on Bill 197 on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus as our energy critic. I don't know if I want to respond first to the member's bill or the comments that were just made by the member on the government side. However, I can confirm one thing, and that is that the member who proposes this bill is absolutely right: The government has made a terrible mess of our electricity system. They have actually mangled the way we deliver electricity in the province of Ontario, and it's completely wrong.

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I appreciate the fact that the member has put forward this bill. The spirit of the bill is right on. However, the practicality of some of the things that he's proposing isn't going to work. We'll get into a little bit of that.

When I became the energy critic a little over a year ago now, we started developing our energy policy. I spent close to eight months during that policy advisory process in our committee and meeting with stakeholders, as well, as part of my job as the energy critic.

The member was a little bit late in introducing his bill, so we haven't had an opportunity to take a really close look at it, but we can discuss this in broad strokes. In the broad strokes, I would say that this is an admirable aim, but there is a little bit of shortcoming here on practical application.

Typically, when duties are imposed on the minister, as they were in British Columbia back in the Gordon Campbell government, the minister faces some kind of pain or penalty if the duty isn't lived up to. In other provinces where ministers have such duties imposed on them, duties are usually given specific annual targets and, year over year, they're required to meet those targets. I remember when the former Mike Harris government here had their Red Tape Commission. I know the member knows that well. There were specific targets that were set out for that committee to meet every year. If they didn't meet those, there were certain penalties attached to it as well.

The bill that we're debating here today only has one target date and that's December 31 of this year. On the measures it recommends, it offers no specific, actionable set of targets for each of the policy measures that are mentioned in the bill. It could be for this reason that it offers no penalty on the minister should they fail to meet these targets.

The member opposite on the government side was talking about the fact that they've done a lot of this work already and they've come up with a solution for this problem, but clearly that's a bogus response to what the member has presented here today as a solution to this problem as well. The member opposite on the government side has said they've come up with a solution to lower the cost of producing electricity, but they haven't done anything of that type.

It's difficult for me to assess on the surface what the actual purpose of this legislation is if it's not going to work when it's implemented. If it were to pass in its current form, it would provide no reasonable recourse for either the public or the members of this House to force the minister to do anything differently than they're doing now. For that reason, there is an apparent flaw in the structure of the bill.

Now, as to the substance of the bill itself and the measures that it recommends, it is an interesting piece of law. Large sections of it seem to have been lifted from the PC platform, or I believe maybe they used the PC platform as a starting point, but it did take a bit of a wild turn, especially when it comes to the Liberals' unfair hydro plan.

We're all, for example, in favour of greater transparency. I know I wrote this down as the member was speaking, that we need to get back to transparency, and I agree with him 100%, because the Liberals have not been transparent on the electricity file and on the energy file for a long, long time, as the member pointed out—all the way back to 2004. But at least on this side of the House—I can speak for all of the members on this side of the House—we talk about transparency all the time, and

the Liberals have not lived up to that transparent level of government that we provide on this bill. The sections of this bill which deal with transparency don't really offer any practical solutions for how we can improve that. What are offered are either platitudes or already existing processes.

Some of the other provisions would actually violate existing power purchase agreements, leaving the province open to lawsuits unless you legislatively terminate those contracts, but that option isn't mentioned in this legislation.

Changing the Independent Electricity System Operator's, the IESO's, dispatch order for technologies is fine. The member talked about, "Why are we wasting our low-cost nuclear power and why are we wasting our low-cost and renewable hydroelectric power in favour of solar and wind, which are much more expensive?" He's absolutely correct on that. This government has completely botched this process.

We just spent some time talking about the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, or at least the member from Windsor–Tecumseh just did when he was talking about the bill that we were just speaking of, declaring an engineers' day in Ontario. The Liberals have made a terrible mess when it comes to dispatching the electricity and the energy that we're using here in Ontario. So we can take steps to do that.

Speaker, I would also agree with the member when he talks about backroom deals. It goes back to that lack of transparency, but clearly what we've seen here in Ontario are these backroom deals that have been made, and we have followed the money. We have followed the money, and those who made considerable contributions to the Liberal Party have benefited when it comes to the awarding of these contracts. That is wrong, and it's shamefully wrong.

Madam Speaker, I just want to go back to one last thing before I close off—I know there are a couple of members who want to speak, on our side, to this bill. The member from Northumberland–Quinte West talked about the fact that the government has come up with a solution to the mess that they've made here in Ontario, but clearly they haven't fixed the underlying problem. I think the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills tries to address that issue as well. What they have done is set out to borrow billions and billions of dollars just to get the Liberals through the next election period, which is just around the corner. In turn, they'll be saddling the next generation with the 10 years of mistakes that they have made on the energy file. They will be paid off by electricity customers over the next 30 years.

They haven't fixed a thing, but they've set out to borrow billions and billions of dollars. As the Financial Accountability Officer has said, it could be as much as \$93 billion or \$94 billion at the end of this scheme, just to make it appear as if they're lowering electricity rates in the province of Ontario. It's absolutely shameful. It doesn't fix a thing. It just creates the appearance that electricity bills are a bit lower for the next couple of

years. But we know, because of a leaked cabinet document that was sent to my office and reports from the Auditor General and the Financial Accountability Officer, that after the next election, the electricity rates will start to skyrocket again to record highs. So they haven't fixed a thing.

I know the member has tried to put forward a piece of legislation that will address the problem. There are some shortcomings. If it ever makes it to committee, we will have to take a little bit of a scalpel to it and make sure we do some surgery on it, but the spirit of the bill is a good one.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to speak in this House, and today in response to the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills on An Act respecting affordable electricity.

First of all, I'd like to thank the member for bringing this piece of legislation forward. We don't agree with everything in this legislation, but there are a lot of good points in it. Any time that we get a chance to discuss the electricity system in Ontario, it's time well spent in this Legislature—and I'd like to thank the member for that—because specifically in rural Ontario, electricity is a huge cost. It is driving people out of rural Ontario.

I listened intently to the member, I listened intently to the member of the government and I listened intently to the energy critic from the PCs. One measure in here that we very strongly agree with: "prohibit any measure that results in electricity prices being artificially lowered by borrowing money today that must be paid back in the future." That is against the Liberals' fair hydro plan.

When the member across said that the Liberals were fixing the hydro system and the costs, basically what they're doing is borrowing millions and millions and millions of dollars to artificially lower the price—it's like the minimum payment on a credit card—to make it past the election, and then the bill is going to come due with interest on top. And electricity rates are going to skyrocket.

The interesting part is when the PC energy critic said that the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills had lifted much of this from the PC energy platform. The interesting thing about the PC energy platform, or at least the PC platform for today, is that it's going to keep the Liberal fair hydro plan as part of their platform. So the millions and millions and millions and millions of dollars the PCs are accusing the government of using to buy voters for the next election—the PCs with the current People's Guarantee are going to do exactly the same thing. It's like both pots calling both kettles black.

1510

Quite frankly, that is not the way to fix the problem. It fixes the political problem for the next election, because I know in my constituency office and, I'm sure, many others, the number of complaints that people can't pay their hydro bills—specifically, where I come from, it's very cold in the wintertime and a lot of people heat with

hydro—has gone down because, yes, the bills have gone down, temporarily.

The vast majority of people in this province, tragically, live paycheque to paycheque. If they see a temporary reprieve, they're just happy they can make it to the next month. But the government knows, and the Progressive Conservatives know, that in the long term this isn't going to fix the problem. They're just delaying the balloon payment, they're delaying the fire. So that's one where I was quite surprised when the PC critic brought it up. He focused on the fair hydro plan; we would stop the fair hydro plan. There are other ways to fix this problem, and some of them are in this bill.

We believe in public power. We would focus on public power. We believe that our public utilities should be used to their utmost. We also believe that transmission should be returned to public hands so that you can actually use the ownership of your transmission system for the benefit of your people.

The Ontario Liberals chose to sell 60% of Hydro One. They chose to sell it for a big cheque, for a short-term cheque. They say it's to repurpose the money for transit. We say it's to balance the budget for, once again, political purposes. But by selling 60% of Hydro One, they have foregone huge dividends. Those dividends are now going to the private sector.

So, they got one cheque, but long-term they're costing Ontarians money. And that's not just the NDP saying it; that's the Financial Accountability Officer. By selling Hydro One, they're actually going to cost Ontarians \$1.8 billion more than if they had kept Hydro One and borrowed the money for their transportation infrastructure. They waste billions of dollars. We'll take those dividends that we still have, the 40%, and we'll use those dividends to slowly buy back control of Hydro One.

They tell you that, "Oh, no, we still have control, because we are the biggest shareholder. That maintains our control, and there are safeguards in place." Well, if that is the case, and the Ontario government maintains control in the purpose of Hydro One and the Ontario government is opposed and we are opposed as well to the use of coal for hydro generation, then why is Hydro One investing in coal generation in the United States? Does that benefit anyone in Ontario? And does that benefit the climate? No. That's the reason why we moved—and, I believe, all three major parties agreed to move—away from coal. We shouldn't be investing in coal generation in other counties. If we actually had control of Hydro One, we wouldn't be, so we need to regain control of Hydro One.

Some of the issues where we have some trepidation with this bill—I regret that the member didn't actually spend a lot of time talking about what's in the bill. He talked about his political views, and that's his right. We all talk about our political views. But there are some things he didn't mention in the bill. The bill is totally focused on the lowest price for power for the consumer, and I agree with that to a point, but to only focus on that, you are giving up other things. When you always go to

the lowest common denominator, you could potentially be giving up reliability.

I know from my business—I'm a farmer by trade—that when I hired custom workers, the one who was always the cheapest didn't necessarily get the job done on time. With hydro, because it's an essential service, we have to make sure that it's not just as cheap as possible, but that it's reliable, because one of the things that precipitated the hydro crisis was that under the Conservative government, they didn't spend on the system. We had a brownout, and whether it was caused by that or not, that led the next government to spend a lot of money on the hydro system.

We've got to make sure that we don't go to the lowest common denominator and that we make sure that everyone is provided service, because one of the things we face in rural Ontario is that in some places in rural Ontario—and that's why we fight so hard to keep Hydro One—it doesn't pay a private company to deliver hydro at the end of the road. I come from the end of the road. I don't want that to happen. This bill doesn't guarantee that, and that is a huge issue.

That's one of the reasons that we so strongly believe that essential services should be delivered publicly. The private sector has got a huge role to play in the province. We're not anti-private sector at all—they have a huge role to play—but essential services shouldn't be profit-driven. How I know that is because the Internet is profit-driven, and in how many places in rural Ontario is broadband Internet either unaffordable, unavailable or unusable? That's because it's profit-driven. Hydro is an essential service. It can't be profit driven. That's why we want to pull that back.

We agree that where there is private hydro generation, where it's too expensive, when their contracts run out, they should be lapsed. You can't just cancel contracts because you'll—that's the gas plant scandal. That's what happened with the gas plant scandal. They tried to cancel a contract, could have gotten sued and had to pay a bunch of money. You can't do that.

But we agree with the sentiment of the bill, that the primary focus of the hydro system has to be consumer-driven. Where the government has consistently gotten into trouble is that they never look at the unintended consequences. They look at the political answer. That's the fair hydro plan: Provide a political short-term answer, and the unintended consequences are going to be huge.

The Green Energy Act: Green energy isn't a bad thing, but they created the Green Energy Act—

Mr. Michael Harris: Which you voted for.

Mr. John Vanthof: We support the principle. What we don't support is using the Green Energy Act to artificially support the green energy industry and not look at the unintended consequences. The Green Energy Act shouldn't have superseded the Planning Act. It shouldn't have superseded the other acts. Then you wouldn't have had the fallout in rural Ontario that they're having now. That was a problem—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): I would ask that the member from St. Catharines come to order, please.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker.

In closing, we have some serious concerns with portions of this bill. If it makes it to committee, we will raise some serious concerns, but there are some principles in this bill which we can support. I'd like to thank the member for bringing it forward.

1520

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: This bill that we're discussing is 100% about a hard-right, unworkable, partisan agenda. If I can quote from my good friend from Prince Edward-Hastings, who is the PC energy critic—who is a very splendid guy, actually. He said, in part, that the practicality just isn't going to work. Now, on that point, I very much agree with it.

He also said that "large sections of it seem to have been lifted from the PC platform," which is yet another reason to say to folks out there: "buyer beware." We've seen what happens when the Conservatives run electricity in the past. It didn't work then and it's not going to work now or in the future.

Let's just go through this bill, take it piece by piece and examine what it's proposing and look at some of the problems with it. It asks that water-powered and nuclear-powered generating stations be used to their maximum advantage. Well, our water power and our nuclear generating stations are all managed by Ontario Power Generation and Bruce Power. As of noon today, the demand in Ontario was 17,260 megawatts of electricity. Nuclear was supplying 10,600 of that; hydro was supplying 5,050 of that. Taken together, 91% of Ontario's power was being supplied by hydro and nuclear. So he's asking for something that's already happening.

The bill asks that electricity be distributed through the distribution grid and supplied on the basis of competitive bids from all potential suppliers. Well, the Independent Electricity System Operator does exactly that.

The bill asks for transparency in the electricity regulation process, and the Ontario Energy Board does exactly that.

He goes on to talk about, and let me use the words exactly: "terminate all existing subsidies for wind and solar electricity generation projects at the earliest possible opportunity." Well, that involves the abrogation of binding, long-term agreements with suppliers, which would cost the province billions and billions. By the way, most of the capacity coming on now is bidding very close to grid parity. So to talk about a premium in an age when the price of renewable electricity has been coming down and is very close to grid parity is just an exercise in sophistry.

The bill continues on to say that it requires the grid "to be maintained in an efficient state to serve all customers." Well, the Independent Electricity System Operator, Hydro One and our local distribution companies do

exactly that, and in the last dozen years, the province has spent \$15 billion upgrading the grid to do precisely that.

It also asks that the costs for maintaining and operating the grid are "reduced to levels that are comparable with costs in the most cost-effective private operations." In other words: cuts, cuts, cuts; stop investing; run it into the ground and do nothing. That's what caused the problems in the first place.

The bills asks that costs be required "to be open to public scrutiny." Well, in the case of publicly traded entities such as Alectra and Hydro One, the Ontario Securities Commission does exactly that, and, for the balance, the Ontario Energy Board does precisely that.

It talks about removing restrictions that limit the ability of a potential supplier of electricity to use the grid. Well, that's called a capacity option, and we have that.

We talk about prohibiting "any measure that results in electricity prices being artificially lowered by borrowing money today that must be paid back in the future." Now, those words are lifted directly from the bill. In other words, what it does is say that you can't invest in capital expenses. What it does is say that the \$50 billion that Ontario has spent in updating generation and transmission over the last dozen years—if this bill were in force, you couldn't do it, which is ludicrous.

There's a bunch of gobbledegook in here that asks that electricity bills itemize the portion of the bill that deals with the repayment of sunk costs and so on and so forth. This sort of nonsense is like asking a product manufacturer to itemize out R&D, product development and marketing on the price tag of a good on the shelf, which, if that sounds realistic, I challenge you to try doing that in the private sector.

It talks little bit about electricity exports and doesn't make a whole lot of sense in it. The reason that electricity is exported in the first place is that (1) Ontario doesn't need it at that moment; and (2) the provinces and states to which we are connected at 26 intertie points—Quebec, Manitoba, New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota—do need it at exactly that point in time. So to suggest that, somehow or other, Ontario consumers are being disadvantaged by taking surplus power that isn't needed at a point in time in the province of Ontario while the power is available and selling it at a profit to Quebec, which is buying power from Ontario even as we speak—Quebec has a shortage of electricity in the wintertime and Quebec buys the equivalent of about 500 megawatts of power from Ontario throughout the winter. In turn, Ontario buys about 500 megawatts of power at the same price, under the same terms, from Quebec in the summer, when Ontario needs the power and Quebec doesn't. That's what neighbours do; they trade with one another in that way.

Mr. Todd Smith: So is the deal back on again?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings, would you come to order, please?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Imagine, the member for Prince Edward-Hastings is heckling me for agreeing with him.

There are three other clauses in here that talk about the metering of systems and talk about taking advantage of the actual costs of production, somehow suggesting that transmission is free—well, transmission is not free; that the global adjustment should not be paid—every utility that generates electricity from more than one source uses global adjustment, no matter by what name they call it; and that, somehow or other, overhead and taxes should not be paid. That's probably the reason that this bill really isn't going anywhere, regardless of how the Legislature chooses to dispose of it this afternoon: these—to be polite—totally unworkable and, quite frankly, ludicrous conditions that the bill proposes.

Now, it also suggests “conducting a study to identify other ways to allow Ontario residents to benefit immediately for more efficient use of the electricity system” and “implementing regulatory and policy changes to ensure that customers benefit from reduced costs that result from more efficient use of the electricity system”—in other words, it says the same thing twice—but that's called the long-term energy plan. If the member had been sitting here through the discussion of it during the fall, the member would have seen exactly what he has proposed here in the 2017 long-term energy plan.

So, Speaker, in conclusion, this is indeed a sorry populist excuse for declining supply, soaring prices and fatal underinvestment, which is what happened the last time a government tried to apply measures such as this. It would, in turn, instill complete industry chaos.

I would like to conclude by pointing out that the member's proposals conform perfectly with the portions of the PC platform that they are lifted from. Let's understand and revamp very quickly the four pillars of the PC energy platform: (1) do nothing and run your assets into the ground; (2) burn fossil fuels; (3) buy power from other jurisdictions at premium prices; and (4) when everything fails—and under PC policies, everything always does fail—just blame it on the Liberals.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings is warned.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker.

In conclusion, this bill is unworkable right out of the gate, as I said, regardless of how the House chooses to dispose of it. I would imagine that the dialogue that we're having here is probably the last we will ever see of it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: We're here today talking about the independent member who represents the riding of Carleton–Mississippi Mills and his Affordable Energy Act. It's a lively debate, because we are getting to discuss hydro rates once again in the Legislature. It has probably been the number one topic of interest to constituents across the province of Ontario.

What the member did say that I really supported is that we should be putting the interests of the citizens of Ontario first. He's absolutely correct that that's what we

should be doing and that we need to get back to transparency, which I support as well.

I'm going to actually quote, because it's so interesting that we're discussing this right following declaring March 1 as a professional engineers of Ontario recognition day here in the province of Ontario.

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It's so interesting that we've just had the debate for that motion in the House, because here I have in front of me the official blog of the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers. They call it Society Notes, if anybody is interested in following it at home. They did a detailed analysis of year-end data issued by the Independent Electricity System Operator and Ontario Power Generation. Basically, they reported, for the data for 2016, that the province of Ontario wasted a total of 7.6 terawatt hours of clean energy, an amount equal to powering more than 760,000 homes for one year, which is a value in excess of \$1 billion.

Paul Acchione is their energy expert and the former president and chair of the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers. I'm going to quote him now. He said, in answer to his own question of why Ontario is wasting all this energy, “‘Curtailed’ is an industry term that means the power was not needed in Ontario, and could not be exported, so it was dumped. It's when we tell our dams to let the water spill over top, our nuclear generators to release their steam, and our wind turbines not to turn, even when it's windy.

“These numbers show that Ontario's cleanest source of power is literally going down the drain because we're producing too much. Speaking as an engineer, an environmentalist and a ratepayer, it's an unnecessary waste of beautiful, clean energy, and it's driving up the cost of electricity.”

We also heard that the government recognized, just before this election, that energy rates going up over 300% in the province of Ontario is not going to get them very many votes. They figured out a bit of a scheme whereby they can borrow billions of dollars of taxpayers' money from future generations, and pay billions of dollars in interest in the future—and we're paying now as well—in order to subsidize, with ratepayers' own taxes, their energy bills in order to make them feel they have actually done something to cut the cost of electricity.

The cost of electricity did not go down. Your bills went down, but electricity costs just the same. The pages who are sitting here today, listening very attentively, are starting to realize that they are going to be paying higher taxes to pay for the electricity that we are using today just to heat this building. There's something wrong.

I have to commend the member just down the row from me for making the effort to remind everybody in Ontario—when there are so many other things going on and they're not seeing their electricity rates necessarily go up—to make them realize that there is a problem here in Ontario that needs fixing.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): The time for debate is over.

The member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Thank you to the members who commented on the bill.

Madam Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to lower the cost of electricity to the people of Ontario and the businesses of Ontario. The main reason that the cost of electricity is so harmfully high is that the members of this Legislature did not do their job. Their job was and is to hold the government to account. The government has broken the law. The 2004 act to amend the Electricity Act requires the Ontario Power Authority to prepare a detailed plan for electricity production, distribution and sale in Ontario and to have this plan approved by the government.

The plan was intended to protect consumers from high prices. The Auditor General said, in her 2017 report, that no such plan had ever been approved in the previous 10 years, as required by legislation.

This Legislature did nothing to stop the government from breaking the law. The MPPs—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): I'd ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It's true.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): I would ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I can't withdraw the truth.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): I name the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

Mr. MacLaren was escorted from the chamber.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): We will deal first with ballot item number 25, standing in the name of Mr. Anderson.

Mr. Anderson has moved private member's notice of motion number 84. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

AFFORDABLE ELECTRICITY ACT, 2018

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Mr. MacLaren has moved second reading of Bill 197, An Act respecting affordable electricity. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Mr. John Vanthof: On division.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Carried on division.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): The bill will be referred to Committee of the Whole.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CLIMATE CHANGE

Hon. Chris Ballard: I move that, in the opinion of the House, we recognize that climate change is a real and present threat that is already costing Ontario families, and that Ontario should do its part in supporting national and international efforts to reduce greenhouse gas pollution at the lowest possible cost to families and businesses by putting a price on pollution to combat climate change.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): The minister has moved government notice of motion number 60. I recognize the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Chris Ballard: I'll be sharing my time with the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and minister responsible for small business.

I'm quite honoured to be able to stand in the House today to talk about climate change. Our government is well aware of the increasing global threat of climate change. Many of us believe that it is the single biggest threat to our future prosperity and our security.

Frankly, I also find it appalling that, in 2018, we even have to have this debate. Over the past seven months as Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, I've been invited to at least six screenings of the National Geographic's *Before the Flood* documentary that is based on real, solid science about climate change. It is real, Speaker. We know that it is being caused by human activity, and we know we have to do something about it.

The *Before the Flood* documentary, I will tell you, Speaker, at each showing has been packed with folks from across the GTA, business owners as well. They are very anxious and very concerned about the world's future security and about our shared prosperity if we do not address the effects of climate change, if we do not take any action.

As I said, Speaker, it's appalling that in 2018 we even have to have this debate. But frankly, the PCs leave us with no choice when most of their candidates in the leadership race have absolutely zero plans to address climate change. They are forcing us to ask the question, do they really even believe that climate change is a problem, is it even happening?

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We've have seen that some PC members still refuse to accept the realities of climate change. In fact, the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex tweeted on January 16 of last year, “@JustinTrudeau should not force provinces to implement a carbon tax or cap-and-trade. Period.”

But for almost all of the leadership candidates to have absolutely no plan—some are even going a step further to say—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): I would ask that the number of conversations going on be curtailed, or please talk so that you're not interrupting the speakers.

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you, Speaker.

As I was saying, for almost all of the leadership candidates to have absolutely no plan—some are even going a step further to say they will fight the federal government's carbon tax in court—is simply outrageous. Do they honestly believe that taking the federal government to court over this issue is worth the taxpayers of Ontario's money? Speaker, how can they honestly believe that doing nothing about climate change is even an option?

You know, Speaker, in just—

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Innovation, not taxation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): I would ask that the member come to order.

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you, Speaker.

In reviewing all of the current research that's going on by academics and think tanks around the world, one leapt to attention just last week for me that I would like to highlight. It's a study by the Oxford Martin School at the University of Oxford. I can read you the title of their study, Speaker: "Carbon Pricing Can Spur Economic Growth More Than We Thought, Says New Research." This is what the research is now telling us—the impact of carbon pricing and the impact on reducing carbon emissions and carbon pollution and the positive effect it can have on our economy. I will talk more about that later: the very positive effect our cap-and-invest program is having on the economy right here in Ontario—and it's measurable.

We on this side of the House know that there is no choice but to act around climate change. I would have hoped that, in 2018, any discussion or any debate around climate change would be moot, that we would all understand and accept that it is a reality and that we have to take action. Again, standing by and doing nothing is not an option—not on this side of the House anyway.

We know that when experts and scientists say that it's time for action, we have absolutely no choice but to listen and take action. When 97%, 98%, 99% of the climatologists and meteorologists who publish tell us that the time for action is now, we have to listen; we cannot ignore it. We know that we can't stand by and force our children and our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren to bear the consequences of doing absolutely nothing. That's why this government has taken real, significant actions and real leadership to address climate change.

In 2016, we introduced the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act, which outlines the steps we're taking to face climate change head-on. One of the most important parts of that act is putting a price on carbon. Our ministry spent a long time carefully considering our options for carbon pricing. We talked to the public. We talked to business. We talked to the ENGOs. We talked to others—anyone with an interest in climate change, in greenhouse gas pollution. We eventually decided that a cap-and-trade or—as I prefer to call it—a cap-and-invest program is the best way to ensure we're reducing greenhouse gas pollution from business and industry at the lowest cost possible to the

people and the businesses of this province. We can't stand idly by. We have to have a very progressive policy, Speaker.

We've seen that experts agree that cap-and-trade is the best way to put a price on carbon. In her January 2018 greenhouse gas reduction report, Ontario's independent Environmental Commissioner said that "in terms of emission reductions, cap and trade outperforms the ... carbon tax." She said, again, that cap-and-trade outperforms the carbon tax.

The commissioner's report also finds that Ontario's cap-and-invest program will save almost all of us money—let me repeat that: will save almost all of us money—whereas a carbon tax would mean the cost for families and businesses would go up much more.

As well, the commissioner recently said most jurisdictions are choosing to implement cap-and-trade programs because they reduce emissions for a lower cost. In fact, the stats are in. With China signalling that it's putting a price on carbon, the vast majority of the industrialized world will have a price on carbon soon, and about 90% of them have chosen a cap-and-trade-type program.

Back in December 2017, a report from Enviro-Economics said that our plan to cap emissions from business is almost three times more effective and costs only half as much as the carbon tax that was previously suggested by the PCs. Now it appears they might even be doing away with that.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Well, I hope not.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): The Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs will come to order.

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you, Speaker.

I'll restate that. Businesses need certainty when making their business decisions. Threatening to turn back the clock in pursuit of a poorly defined, unaffordable and costly tax does the opposite of providing business certainty. It creates unnecessary risk. Inefficient, ineffective and unaffordable: That's how I would define a scheme that costs more but does less.

Our four auctions to date frankly show that businesses have confidence in our cap-and-trade market, and the market is functioning as it should. We are proud to say that third-party experts and businesses alike are confident in our best-in-class cap-and-trade program.

Now, what is exciting about our program is that it does two things. First, and most importantly, it reduces greenhouse gas pollution. We have a limit—or a cap—on how much businesses are allowed to pollute. That limit goes down each and every year, Speaker, so each year, businesses are allowed to pollute less and less.

The second thing our program does is, it reinvests in Ontarians. The cap-and-invest program has a trade component where businesses are allowed to buy allowances. The proceeds from our auctions last year alone generated \$1.9 billion in proceeds. That \$1.9 billion is being reinvested in programs that are helping Ontario homeowners live more sustainable lives at lower costs. Thanks to the four auctions, in the last year alone

we've already invested hundreds of millions of dollars into green projects like transit, like electric vehicle incentives, like housing retrofits—things that help the people of Ontario fight climate change and save money at the same time.

Our plan isn't just about putting a price on carbon and reducing greenhouse gas pollution, though, Speaker. It's also about investing in Ontario's future and creating a fair society, where we all benefit from cleaner air, reduced energy costs and clean, sustainable, well-paying jobs.

Independent economic analysis shows that our plan is the most effective and the most affordable approach, and is significantly cheaper than a stand-alone carbon tax. It is certainly more effective and more affordable than doing absolutely nothing, like so many of the PC leadership would have us do.

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Our plan encourages innovation. It drives investments to help Ontario continue to be a leader in the low-carbon economy. Meanwhile, again, the PCs have decided Ontario's environment, I guess, is not worth protecting. I'm truly upset to see that they have decided climate change isn't even worth fighting.

You know, Speaker, tell that to the people of Brantford, who are experiencing, right now, very real impacts of climate change which, as we know, has caused severe flooding to their homes, their community and businesses. Will the next leader of the PC Party tell the people of Brantford that climate change isn't real, that it's not worth fighting? Frankly, I find that completely outrageous and irresponsible.

As I mentioned earlier, I was at a screening of National Geographic's *Before the Flood*, which is filled with real science and real people talking about the impact of climate change on them. We've been somewhat fortunate in southern Ontario not to feel the impact of climate change like other communities have, whether it be the forest fires that burned down a good portion of Fort McMurray and burned thousands of hectares of forest in BC and in California, the droughts of California, or the incredible hurricanes of the gulf coast and the Caribbean. We've been fortunate not to live on island communities that are flooding where a decision has to be made: "We have to relocate to another country because the sea is rising and washing away our island." These things are real, Speaker.

The day that I spoke at the last screening was just a couple of days ago. We were in the theatre. It was 15 degrees out—15 degrees Celsius outside, in February, Speaker, in February. It's days like that that are driving up the levels of phosphorus in our lakes. My friends who are farmers in the Holland Marsh area talk about how the nutrients in their land, the very important nutrients in their lands, are being washed into the Holland River, which feeds Lake Simcoe, because their land is frozen and the rain is coming down and washing the nutrients into the lake.

We were on track to reduce phosphorus in Lake Simcoe. We were doing a really good job of reducing

phosphorus loads in Lake Simcoe, but because of the past few years and these incredible rains we have when the land is frozen, our phosphorus levels in that watershed are going up, a direct result of climate change.

Things are heating up, Speaker, and scientists are predicting it's only going to get worse as climate change brings stronger storms and more severe weather. I'm far from alone, as I said at the opening, in seeing climate change as the single greatest threat to our security and our prosperity.

We made the choices that created this situation with the introduction of carbon fuels, the beginning of the industrial revolution, burning coal, burning oil, burning natural gas, those fossil-based fuels that make our way of life today possible. But we're fighting climate change here in Ontario, Speaker; let me assure you of that. We're fighting it through our cap-and-invest program. We're capping greenhouse gas pollution. We're investing the proceeds into further reducing greenhouse gas pollution. We're really working hard through the funds to make life for everyday Ontarians easier. I'll assure you, Speaker, that every penny we raise through our cap-and-trade auctions, every penny must be invested in projects that prevent or reduce greenhouse gas pollution. So far, we've announced more than a billion dollars' worth of investments that reduce greenhouse gas pollution and other nasty air pollutants. We talk about carbon dioxide; it's the primary gas that is causing climate change, but methane is equally bad. Methane leaking, for example, from dumps, from other sources, is equally bad. We need to deal with those and other nasty pollutants.

We've invested in social housing, so that social housing providers can improve the insulation, replace leaky windows, and improve old boiler heating and air conditioning systems. The savings that they get from not having to do that work are invested into providing more facilities, more social housing and improved social housing. That's just one.

We've announced the same type of funding for hospitals across Ontario. They're putting in money that they would have spent on upgrading insulation and improving windows. We can do it through the cap-and-trade program, so that they can take the savings and future energy savings and reinvest those in what they should be doing, which is patient care.

We recently announced another program for universities and colleges, for \$514 million. I was there with Minister Hunter to make a fantastic announcement that her ministry has pulled together. It's the same thing: improvements and investments in insulation and windows, upgrading boilers and air conditioning systems. The money that those institutions would have to have put into their facilities, they can now invest in providing better education. Money that they will gain from energy savings, they can now put into providing better education. The list goes on, Speaker. Our schools are another great beneficiary.

We're supporting indigenous communities, as well. One of the sad truths about climate change is that the

most vulnerable among us are the ones who did not create this problem. Quite frankly, our indigenous communities did not create the climate change. Their carbon footprint is so minuscule, yet they bear the brunt.

I was in Moosonee and Moose Factory Island just this past summer, talking with local leaders about issues they face around food security. There is a direct link between climate change and food insecurity in our remote northern indigenous communities. Last year, the winter ice roads that are so important for transporting fuel and basic goods that they need to stock up on for an entire year—that winter road was not open long enough to move enough fuel, flour, sugar and coffee. All those essentials had to be flown in by airplane at great cost. You can imagine the cost of the diesel fuel that had to come in by airline.

These are communities that are impoverished to begin with, and now face additional burdens brought about by climate change that they have to pay more for something they didn't cause. That's not right, and that's why we have a responsibility, as a government, to do better.

I want to take a final moment to talk about the opportunities. We've talked about the threat of climate change. We've talked about climate change as a real and present danger. The final point I want to talk about is the opportunities that are presented.

Ten years ago, I'm not sure if any of us had heard about clean-tech industry. It really wasn't high on the radar. But I can tell you that today, clean-tech industries, those industries that are focused on battling climate change, today number some 3,000 in Ontario alone. Yes, 3,000 clean-tech industries are located right here in Ontario. Many of them got their support through this government's efforts. Those 3,000 companies employ some 65,000 Ontarians in an industry that, 10 years ago, virtually didn't exist. The startling number, Speaker, is those 3,000 companies account for a little over \$8 billion in revenues, \$1 billion of which come from exports of service and product.

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So there is opportunity. There is a bit of a silver lining, we'll say, to the issue around climate change, because Ontario has taken a leadership role in dealing with climate change. We have closed our coal-fired plants, which I've spoken about often here in the House. One of our single biggest sources of greenhouse gas pollution was our coal plants, and our Premier had the courage to shut them down. There are many benefits to adapting to and dealing with climate change, Speaker, but I will say that it starts with acknowledging that climate change is a real thing. It starts with understanding that human activity is the reason we are dealing with rapid climate change. And, frankly, it means that you have to acknowledge and have to put in place some type of plan to reduce greenhouse gas pollution and deal with the effects of climate change right across our society, for everyone.

Speaker, I'll end by saying that I stand in somewhat stunned disbelief at the activities of the past few weeks. Where I could have a good debate with the members

opposite in the PC Party about which program to put a price on carbon is the best one—I'm happy to have that debate; I have the evidence to show cap-and-trade is the best system. But I can't even have that debate now because the majority of the PC leadership candidates I don't believe even believe in climate change because they have renounced a carbon tax, they've renounced putting a price on carbon, and they have renounced a cap-and-trade system. I don't know what's left. There's no other system out there that's left to deal with climate change in a timely manner.

I'll leave it there, Speaker, and turn the rest of my time over to my colleague.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): I recognize the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the minister responsible for small business.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Well, thanks very much, Madam Speaker, and let me say at the outset that I think you're doing an incredible job in the chair this afternoon. It's always a very challenging position, but it's very important to retain the decorum and the rules of procedure here in the Ontario Legislature.

I see my good friend the member from Wellington-Halton Hills is with us this afternoon. It's always good to have him in the House. Over the last number of years, I've had the opportunity to attend a number of events in his riding. I think we did two groundbreaking sessions together, at the new dairy research station in Elora and now the beef research station right across the road. He always shows great hospitality when I've been in the area. I just want to report, through you, Speaker, to him this afternoon that the construction of the beef research station is well under way. I think it's going to be very important, as agriculture plays its role, of course, in fighting climate change in the province of Ontario. Those two research stations, and hopefully more down the road, will be critical, along with the great work—just a week ago, I had the opportunity to be with President Franco Vaccarino of the University of Guelph. We entered into a 10-year research agreement with the University of Guelph worth about \$775 million over 10 years.

We're so happy to be a partner with the University of Guelph, all of us. I've always said that agriculture is a non-partisan issue. All 107 members in this House have a real interest in agriculture. The University of Guelph is now ranked amongst the top universities in the world when it comes to agricultural research. Part of that will be how agriculture will adapt to climate change in the 21st century.

Madam Speaker, our youth are going to be playing such an important role as we continue to address climate change in this province. Look, you can see what youth can do. All of us have been following the very tragic circumstances in Florida, the loss of life of 17 very young people. Their future was just snuffed out in a matter of moments due to a deranged person who took their lives. We've seen how the youth in the United States are going to pressure American people in the Congress and the Senate to finally make changes to gun control rules south of the border.

But we're also seeing the same thing here in this province when it turns to climate change. Karan and I—our daughter, Shanae, is in her first year at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo. I got the opportunity to pick her up last Friday, because this week is a reading week break in the province of Ontario. Our son, Braden, is in second year at Trent University in environmental science. When I chat to both Shanae and Braden—and often their friends are in the kitchen in the Leal household in Peterborough—they're talking about climate change. They're really talking about the future, and what we need to do collectively to make sure that our planet is going to be there for them as they move through their careers in university and go on and seek their careers in their passion and ultimately contribute to this great province of Ontario.

From a practical perspective, in the city of Peterborough, we had two 100-year storms in a two-year period, 2002 to 2004. I remember 2004 very, very clearly. It was July 15. I woke up, as I usually do, at about 6 a.m., and I went to the kitchen. One of the things I like to do when I'm home is that I like to make my wife coffee and get it ready for her. So I was busy that day getting the coffee ready, and I looked outside our kitchen window. Across the road from our home in Peterborough, there's a golf course. All of a sudden, I looked out the window, and the golf course was like a reservoir of water. I figured out that something pretty significant had gone on in my community. Within a three-hour period, almost 200 millimetres of rain fell on Peterborough.

The interesting thing about this was that, as Vice-President Al Gore now describes it, these rain bombs fell in a very short period of time of intensive rainfall. Of course, there was a flood in Peterborough, with extensive damage.

The day after, then-Premier McGuinty came to Peterborough. The then Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, responsible for emergency measures in Ontario, Monte Kwinter, the very distinguished member from York Centre, in his role as minister, came to Peterborough to take a look at the damage. Of course, we were able to declare a state of emergency.

Sylvia Sutherland, a good friend of mine, the longest-serving mayor in Peterborough's history, in fact was the mayor when I got elected for the first time to Peterborough city council in 1985. I saw Sylvia just last night. We were at an event together in Peterborough. She quickly passed a resolution of council to declare Peterborough an emergency. That, of course, kicked in the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program in Peterborough. They were there when we needed them. Somebody nicknamed the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program as "Ontario Does Right At Peterborough." The initials still work the same, so we remember that very well. Of course, that started the rebuilding process.

But what I think has now taken place in the province of Ontario, and indeed in North America, is that when you talk to municipal engineers and municipal leaders,

we really are starting to move from disaster management to disaster prevention. When we're looking at our water and waste water treatment plants, all of that infrastructure that goes underground, we're starting now to plan for the inevitability of these very volatile weather patterns that we're now being faced with.

Why is that so important? Well, when you talk to the Insurance Bureau of Canada, because of hurricanes in the United States—in many ways insurance becomes a vast pool, and we're able to ascertain risk. If we don't manage effectively our infrastructure going forward, there's no question that property insurance rates will inevitably go up, because they're pooling a risk, so we've got to make sure that we take preventive action in that area. That's something that those of us, all 107 members—when we go to AMO now and ROMA, there has been a fundamental paradigm taking shift.

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Now the other thing is that, in 2016, there were five counties in Peterborough, including my own Peterborough county, that had the driest summer in 100 years. I remember it extremely well. As minister, I was taking a tour of fields that were parched. I was down in the Belleville area with my friend Lloyd Crowe, who is one of the largest soybean growers in that part of Ontario. Sadly, Madam Speaker, it brought tears to my eyes. I was in a field of soybeans, I grabbed one of the pods on one of the plants, I squeezed it and it turned to dust, it was so dry that year.

Again, what took place was a localized drought. It covered five counties in the province of Ontario, but other parts of Ontario in the summer of 2016 got adequate rainfall. Then the reverse took place last summer, when the area of Peterborough got a lot. I was up with the member from Ottawa. We took a tour and, of course, the abundance of rainfall that occurred in the Ottawa area—again, those significant rain bombs, intense rainfall in a very short period of time, localized flooding and substantial damage, of course, to the crops in that area.

More and more, Madam Speaker, we need to plan for the future. Of course, we're doing that work. We're seeing through the University of Guelph in terms of planning for the future and in terms of making agriculture more sustainable in a period of very volatile weather patterns brought about by climate change. We're very pleased that through the legislative process, every dollar that we raise through the auctions of cap-and-trade is put back into Ontario's economy. As the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change pointed out very clearly, this is a real plus for many businesses in the province of Ontario.

Just last weekend, Family Day weekend, I had the opportunity to go to Mississauga and visit the Mississauga home show. What was so interesting about that is that a significant number of the vendors who were there last Sunday were advertising the GreenON program. These were small businesses that were in the roofing business, small businesses that were in the window business and small businesses that were in other things

that we would use in our households to do renovations or retrofits. Of course, they were clearly advertising the benefits of the GreenON program.

When we've had the opportunity to work with our colleagues, both in the province of Quebec and in California, the cap-and-trade program has been extremely successful. It has provided the opportunity for us to do significant reinvestment back into Ontario's economy. I know all 107 members should reach out in their community to see how the GreenON is working very successfully with a number of business entities that are there.

Madam Speaker, a number of months ago, of course, there was quite an almost Hollywood production when the people's choice platform was unveiled. I believe my friend from Wellington-Halton Hills was at that event. There were lights, there was music, there was a lot of backdrop for the people's choice platform that was being unveiled. What was interesting enough, having looked at budgets and doing the analysis, was that the underpinning of the people's choice platform was a carbon tax. Everything in the people's choice platform was predicated on a substantial revenue flow from a carbon tax in the province of Ontario to fund all the various elements of the people's choice platform.

Now, Madam Speaker, when you look at what's being discussed today, everybody seems to be running away from the carbon tax, so I do have some questions. Whoever becomes the leader, they have the people's choice platform still in place—and the people's choice platform, all the component parts of that are predicated on revenue coming in from the carbon tax. Well, it's going to be interesting. I think even Houdini would have a hard time trying to work with the people's choice platform, not having the revenue coming in and of course continuing to advocate the components of that. Madam Speaker, I know I grew up in the south end of Peterborough, but I can tell you my Peterborough math tells me, as my friends in rural Ontario often say, that that dog doesn't hunt. There is a gap there of at least \$12 billion, but I suspect at some stage, the people's choice platform will be reworked and voila. We'll see how that is going to come about.

Climate change is one of the great issues of the 21st century. Everybody is coming to grips with it. It's so important that we engage in that. We've had the climate change action plan, we've had the Greenbelt Act and we've had the great lakes protection plan. These are the kinds of things that the next generation are expecting of government leaders here in the province of Ontario, to make sure that we're addressing the question of the 21st century. That is indeed climate change.

I just want to spend a few more minutes here talking about climate change. It's the reality. We know that we have to do something about it, and we know that we must make sure that every part of the economy makes those adjustments to combat climate change. It is indeed looking at ways that we can improve our efficiency here in the province of Ontario, to take those dollars from the

GreenON program and make sure—all Ontario needs to invest in that.

I will be looking forward to how my good friends—I know my friend the member from Wellington-Halton Hills may be speaking on this issue soon. I will certainly be here as we get a very clear articulation where our good friends opposite, the opposition, stand on climate change. I know the people of Peterborough riding will be interested, Madam Speaker, because I do know that many of them right now—it is 4:20 p.m. in the afternoon—are just getting home after a very hard day at work. They have Cogeco cable TV, and I know they're going to be tuning in to channel 95, the Ontario Legislature channel. They'll be able to hear both our friends in the opposition, and indeed the third party, to see where they stand on government motion number 60, which is one of the great public policy debates of the 21st century.

We are pleased that we've put a legislative mechanism in place and that the \$1.9 billion that has been generated through cap-and-trade will go back into the economy. Every single dollar will be going back in from those proceeds from cap-and-trade.

Madam Speaker, I'm very pleased that I've had the opportunity this afternoon to get a few comments on the record. I must say—I have to chat about this—last Saturday, as part of the Family Day weekend, I was out at Chemong Lake in the riding of Peterborough, at an event that was sponsored by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry and my good friends—I'm a member—the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. We were ice fishing on Chemong Lake. But that is also a part of climate change, because we want to make sure that we retain a healthy climate and a good habitat for fish so that many more people, future generations, will have that opportunity on Family Day weekend to go out and enjoy ice fishing, a great experience.

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I must say, I didn't catch anything, but it was a very nice experience to be out with many friends from around Peterborough riding, to have some hot chocolate and enjoy the camaraderie of that. In fact, Madam Speaker, what was really interesting was how many people from the greater Toronto and Hamilton area came to Chemong Lake in Peterborough riding that day to participate in Family Day ice fishing. I was hoping that maybe some of my friends from the opposition would have taken the opportunity to come out and join me. I would have shown them some grand Peterborough hospitality—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): The member from Thornhill will come to order.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Well, thanks very much, Madam Speaker.

But that's related to climate change. I mean, to keep a healthy environment for future generations to enjoy fishing and hunting and all those outdoor activities is very important to us all.

In conclusion, it was really a good opportunity for me to address government motion 60. Of course, I look forward to further discussion on this issue.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have this opportunity this afternoon to participate in this important debate that the government has moved. I'll read quickly the motion that the government has moved that we're going to be debating:

"We recognize that climate change is a real and present threat that is already costing Ontario families, and that Ontario should do its part in supporting national and international efforts to reduce greenhouse gas pollution at the lowest possible cost to families and businesses by putting a price on pollution to combat climate change."

I'm pleased to follow the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, who spoke first, and the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, who also contributed some remarks to this debate.

The minister of agriculture and food mentioned me a couple of times in his speech, and yes, indeed, we welcome his visits to our riding every time he comes. I was delighted to be there with him when we turned the ground on the new beef research facility. I guess it was last summer, if I'm not mistaken. We're excited that that research is going to be taking place. I think it shows our part of the world, in working with the University of Guelph, as the centre of agriculture research not only in Canada, but internationally as well. So we're very excited about that and we appreciate the government's willingness to partner with the University of Guelph.

Certainly for my part, I've been excited to see the partnership renewed: some \$700 million and something committed over the next 10 years. I've been so impressed every time I've visited the University of Guelph to become better acquainted and updated on the research that's being done that is, in fact, leading the world and providing a positive future for agriculture in the province of Ontario and across the country.

Why are we here discussing this issue this afternoon? The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change said something to the effect that he was kind of disappointed that this motion was necessary. The minister of agriculture and food was quite partisan in his remarks. It would appear to be a pattern, of course.

Based on the two motions that were tabled late yesterday afternoon, one on the minimum wage issue and the other on climate change, it would appear that the government lacks a legislative agenda. They don't have too many bills before the House. They don't seem to want to bring forward or introduce government legislation. Of course, we are coming to the end of the government's mandate. The election is scheduled for June 7. The writ period begins no later than May 9, I understand. So the government seems to have run out of legislative ideas, or at least if they have any ideas, they want to postpone the release of those ideas.

We await the provincial budget. It's coming sometime before the election is called, before the House is dissolved. There's a possibility the House will be prorogued. All of these things are up in the air. But what is

clear is the government does not have legislation that it wants to call for debate in this House, or at least a substantial legislative agenda, so they bring forward these motions in an effort to initiate debate and criticize the official opposition. That's exactly what's happening while we go through this leadership exercise that is under way and coming to a conclusion, as you know, Madam Speaker, on March 10.

So, of course, our party is in the midst of a leadership debate discussion. There are candidates running. Each of the candidates has an opportunity to present their views. Our party membership has then the opportunity to elect a new leader and we will continue to undertake that process. But at the same time, I think it's important that the government focus on its real responsibility, which is to provide leadership in the province while it has its mandate. We'll see if its mandate is renewed or not, but while it has its mandate, which is right now, you'd expect and anticipate that there would be legislation introduced in the Legislature.

I want to recognize the municipalities in my riding for the great work that they've done to combat and address the challenge represented by climate change. Right before Christmas, the mayor of the town of Halton Hills, Rick Bonnette, attended the North American Climate Summit in Chicago. He was invited to attend to talk about the initiatives that had been started at the town of Halton Hills to combat climate change. It was a real honour, I think, for him to be able to participate.

It was really something for our community to receive that recognition, and I commend him for it, as well as the town council and staff, who do a great job on so many environmental initiatives. It illustrates, I think, that there is strong leadership not just from the national governments around the world, not just from the subnational governments around the world, but there's also great action being taken by our local municipalities. In the case of the town of Halton Hills, they deserve that credit.

I would also want to point out and acknowledge the great work that's being done by the county of Wellington. As you know, Madam Speaker, they initiated something called the Green Legacy Programme with the audacious goal of planting 150,000 trees in the county of Wellington as a celebration of the 150th anniversary of the county. They had such success and such great buy-in and support from community partners that they decided to continue it year after year.

It's grown to become the largest municipal tree-planting program, I believe, in North America. It's been recognized by the United Nations. The county of Wellington deserves enormous credit for the work that they've done, not just successive county councils and staff, but also the people in the county who have supported it, because it can't be done just by the county. There's support by a lot of community partners as well as a lot of volunteers.

I've been so impressed by it that I brought this forward in the Legislature as a suggestion for the provincial government of what I viewed as a constructive, non-

partisan suggestion that, as Canada celebrates its 150th anniversary, as we did last year, the province of Ontario should be doing something to celebrate 150 years of being part of a confederated Canada. Of course, the province of Ontario was established in 1867 as well.

I was pleased that after bringing the issue forward in a number of ways, including as a private member's resolution, that ultimately the new Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, the member for Cambridge at the time, agreed to promote this idea as a provincial program. They called it Ontario's Green Leaf Challenge. It was a little different in terms of its name, but I was pleased and obviously appreciative that the Minister of Natural Resources recognized that this was something that we could promote.

I'm not sure that the government did as much as it could have to promote the program. I think there would have been greater participation and buy-in by people across the province had there been greater promotion. I had suggested on a number of occasions that they allocate some of the advertising money that the government uses and, of course, is planning to spend on, in this case, what we see now as self-serving political advertising. Some of that money could have been set aside to promote the Ontario Green Leaf Challenge program. We would have had much more participation and buy-in. Unfortunately, apparently, that was not possible. However, I continue to encourage the government to promote and encourage volunteer tree-planting programs across the province.

The issue of climate change has been debated and discussed in the Legislature over the years, as you know, Madam Speaker, in your time here. I think back to the member for Ottawa-Orléans, Phil McNeely, who was here for a number of years. I think he was first elected, if I'm not mistaken, in 2003. He brought forward a private member's bill on three different occasions. I was looking through the Hansard; we looked at it again. In 2006, he brought forward Bill 139; in 2009, Bill 208; and in 2010, Bill 6. All of these bills were suggesting that we declare April 21 as Climate Change Awareness Day. Again, this goes back to 2006.

I had a chance to speak in the Legislature as a private member when he introduced his bill at second reading in 2006. It was on October 5, 2006. During the course of my comments—again, this is 12 years ago, Madam Speaker—I acknowledged that climate change was a fact, that it was most likely caused by human activity and that governments around the world needed to engage in the appropriate actions to try to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I said that in the House. Exactly what I said was this:

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"I think it is fair to say that whether you look at it as climate change or global warming, it is a real concern of many people in the province of Ontario. Certainly, it's a huge concern for many people in Waterloo-Wellington; I'm amongst those people." At that time, Madam Speaker, my riding was known as Waterloo-Wellington.

I was privileged to represent that riding. "The preponderance of scientific evidence seems to suggest that human activity in recent years is at least accelerating this change, if not a contributing factor. So obviously it's something that we all have to be concerned about, any of us who care about the future—and all of us should, obviously. As a father of three children—my wife and I are obviously very concerned about the world that our children and" hopefully "grandchildren will inherit. All of us should share this concern, and all of us should be part of the solution."

Of course, this contradicts the basic narrative of the Liberal government on this issue. They want to suggest that the Conservative Party, the official opposition, is denying that climate change is happening and is opposed to any steps to counter the challenge represented by climate change. In fact, I remember having a private discussion with one of the former Liberal members, a cabinet minister who told me that no Conservative member had ever spoken about this issue in the House. I was so upset, I went right back to my office, found the Hansard, and went up and approached him and showed him that in fact the Conservative Party has been on the record for many years acknowledging that climate change exists, acknowledging that human activity is a significant contributing factor and that we all have to be part of the solution.

What is open for debate, I think, in a democracy is how to best take those steps to ensure that Ontario is part of the solution. That is the subject, I think, of some legitimate debate, obviously, and so that's part of the discussion that we're having today.

The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change in his initial comments on this debate made reference to the reports of the Environmental Commissioner on climate change. I go back again to my debate contribution in 2006. At that time, the Environmental Commissioner of the province of Ontario was an independent officer of the Legislature, independent of government, and was quite critical of the Liberal government and suggesting that very little had been done in terms of a plan. In fact, the Environmental Commissioner's most recent report at that time said "that the ministry does not have a formal written plan or strategy dealing with adaptation to climate change."

That was in 2006. Again, Madam Speaker, when I was standing in the House and acknowledging that it was a problem, the Environmental Commissioner was criticizing the government and saying that they had absolutely no plan to deal with it. Again, I think we have to take the government's narrative on this issue with a grain of salt.

This report from 2016, of course, was quite—actually, the initial report in 2016 by the current Environmental Commissioner, who came to my office on a number of occasions and brought me the report and gave me a great deal of her time to go through the contents and brief me on the recommendations—I would commend Dianne Saxe for the work she's doing as Environmental Com-

missioner. I think she was a very good choice to serve as Environmental Commissioner, and I always look forward to our interactions. When she is prepared to meet with any member of the Legislature, I think they would be well advised to listen to her advice and suggestions. But again, this report in 2016 was, I think, very helpful in terms of the discussion and the debate that has ensued ever since.

She commented on Bill 172, the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act, 2016, which was passed by the Legislature in May 2016. As you'll recall, Madam Speaker, that was the enabling legislation, really, to set up the cap-and-trade program. Our party voted against that bill because we were opposed to cap-and-trade. At the time, we were very concerned that the whole program—in fact, the evidence that we saw from how cap-and-trade had worked in Europe caused us many concerns about how it might unfold here. We believed it would be overly bureaucratic. We believed it would force companies to send millions of dollars to California to purchase cap-and-trade credits, and we were concerned that the proceeds of the cap-and-trade auctions would become part of a Liberal slush fund.

The government, in response to that concern, was prepared to make a promise that all the proceeds from the cap-and-trade auctions would go into environmental programs. We were highly skeptical of that. We look forward to the details on that. Again, the government maintains that that is the case, but we remain to be convinced on that score.

At the same time, we think that many of the concerns we expressed about the cap-and-trade program have in fact come to fruition.

Mr. James J. Bradley: She'll give you a note to tell you to sit down.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Maybe.

There has been a more recent report by the Environmental Commissioner, which was presented to the government in the Legislature—actually, to the Speaker of the Legislature—in January. The most recent report is Ontario's Climate Act: From Plan to Progress, by the Environmental Commissioner. She now calls this report the Annual Greenhouse Gas Progress Report 2017.

It was very interesting, I thought. I was pleased to receive this report in the intersession, when the House wasn't in session. I think it's important to point out some of the recommendations and observations that were in the report.

The Environmental Commissioner indicated that since cap-and-trade was introduced, the government has raised \$1.9 billion from the first four auctions, with \$1.37 billion allocated since November. But the report indicated that the USA's decision to pull out of the Paris agreement is a complicating factor in terms of Ontario's plan to count emission reductions in California as our own.

Of course, we all have our opinions and observations about the American political scene and what's going on in the United States today. But it is obviously up to the

Americans to decide who they're going to choose to be president, and who is going to be elected to the Congress. We have to work with whoever is elected. But at the same time, as we know, the Americans have pulled out of the Paris agreement.

It's hard to predict what's going to happen from day to day in the United States, in their current political scene. If there's a change in the White House in a couple of years' time, and if Congress changes over, there's obviously a chance that that situation will continue to evolve, but that remains to be seen.

We're told that 99% of the \$1.37 billion allocated met the requirements of the climate act. Apparently, the government has set caps on carbon allowances for every year until 2030, in an attempt to deal with predictability issues raised by businesses, and we are told that Ontario emitters can use the carbon market to raise capital to update their equipment.

There were some observations by the Environmental Commissioner which suggested that the government needs to do more and improve its performance. She said that roughly 18% of Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions, including methane and nitrous oxide from waste, agriculture and forestry, are not covered by cap-and-trade.

We were told that Ontario's current climate policy lacks clarity on how to reduce the 18% of Ontario greenhouse gas emissions not covered by cap-and-trade. Offset credits could allow capped emitters to pay these uncapped sectors to reduce their emissions, flowing money to rural communities.

She also observed that the government's pledge to make its own operations carbon-neutral currently covers less than half of the true greenhouse gas footprint. The Ontario government currently does not know the greenhouse gas footprint of what it buys. It does not give that greenhouse gas footprint significant weight in procurement decisions, and the current government does not set aside emissions reductions targets for what it buys or what it reports on its progress.

The Environmental Commissioner also pointed out that freight trucks are a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. They have more than doubled since 1990. Subsidies for natural gas trucking are not likely to reduce emissions. Instead, the commissioner noted, the government should encourage the freight sector to avoid trucking, through logistics and road pricing; improve diesel truck efficiency through providing incentives to companies to scrap older diesel vehicles; and shift freight away from fossil fuels—for example, providing more targeted support for zero-emission trucks.

Many of these recommendations, of course, are quite technical in nature, but I would hope and anticipate that the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change and the ministry staff are reviewing and evaluating them, and we would hope to see an appropriate response from the government.

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I think it's also interesting to point out the fact that we know that Hydro One has purchased a US coal plant, and

the provincial government seems to miss the inconsistency that exists on this issue. They would have us believe that they've done wonderful things by closing the coal-fired plants in the province of Ontario, and yet at the same time, having sold controlling interest in Hydro One, Hydro One has purchased a dirty coal plant in the United States.

I know, from my days as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment, we were always told that half of the air pollution in the province of Ontario came from US sources. Obviously, the airshed doesn't necessarily respect the political boundaries between the two countries.

The government has really never given a satisfactory explanation as to how this is not a huge inconsistency in terms of their climate change policy and program. It also reminds me of the fact that in 2003—this is something that the Minister of the Environment had said in his speech, patting himself on the back for the fact that the government has closed the coal plants across the province, the coal-fired generating stations.

The government seems to forget, or wants to forget, that it was our Minister of the Environment Elizabeth Witmer who was the first Minister of the Environment to announce the proposed closure of a coal-fired electricity generating station, that being the Lakeview Generating station. She announced that when we were still in government.

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Arnott: She initiated the process, and it took a period of time; that's correct.

It's also true that, in 2003, there was a consensus amongst the three major political parties during the election that we would all seek to close the coal-fired electricity generating stations in the province of Ontario. I remember the commitment of the Liberal Party at that time was to close all the coal-fired electricity generating stations by 2007. They maintained it could be done in four years.

We had had a briefing as a government caucus by senior staff of, I believe, the Ministry of Energy—but they could have been Hydro One staff; I can't remember—senior staff who had had a detailed briefing about the technical challenges represented by the commitment. Again, it was a consensus, I believe, amongst all three parties, that this was a desirable goal and we would try to do it. We were told that it couldn't be done until I think 2014, if I'm not mistaken.

During the election campaign, when this issue came up and I was asked, I answered the question honestly. I said that from what I understood, our party wanted to do the same thing, close the coal-fired electricity generating stations, and we would hope to be able to do it by 2014. The Liberal candidate who was running against me said, "Our Liberal Party is committed to doing it by 2007."

As you know, Madam Speaker, as it turned out, that promise was broken, and it was broken again, and I think it was broken a third time, because each time the government said it was going to be able to close the coal-fired

electricity generating stations by a specific date; and then, when they discovered it wasn't possible, practical or doable, they set another date farther out. I believe it was broken three different times. Ultimately, if I'm not mistaken, those coal-fired electricity generating stations were closed around 2014 or 2015, exactly when we had been told when we were in government it could be done.

It was another long list of broken promises by the Liberal government. It's ironic, perhaps, that they continue to boast about the fact that they've achieved this, but it took them far longer than they had indicated in that first election in 2003, and that is a fact.

I also wanted to mention something, because this was brought up by the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, about the flooding that we're experiencing right now in the province. Of course, the Grand River is an important geographical feature of my riding of Wellington-Halton Hills. We are all very concerned about the flooding that has taken place in Brantford and the terrible tragedy that apparently took place in Dufferin county, where the child may have been swept away by the river, from what we're reading. Our thoughts and prayers are obviously with that family. I can hardly imagine what they're going through right now.

We do have the latest information from the Grand River Conservation Authority—who, I would add, do an extraordinary job. I've worked with their staff over the years, and they do a great job in terms of their mandate and their responsibility in terms of flood control. But this extraordinary event that we're experiencing right now because of the unusual weather—we do have an update.

I know that the Speaker of the Legislature, the Honourable Dave Levac, had to go home yesterday to demonstrate his concern and interest. I gather the Premier was there, too. But we're thinking of them today, and I hope that the government is prepared to take whatever steps are necessary and whatever steps are possible to assist the community of Brantford. It appears a state of emergency has been declared. But certainly in these situations, there is an obligation on the part of the provincial government to ensure that everything that can be done is done to assist those communities.

The flood warning is also in effect for the township of Puslinch in Wellington county in my riding and the township of Woolwich, St. Jacobs and West Montrose in Waterloo region. The city of Cambridge is also involved. There's a long list of communities along the Grand River watershed where there's still a flood warning in effect, and a flood watch. We would encourage everyone, if they live near the river or anywhere close, or if they're going close by, to follow very carefully the recommendations of the Grand River Conservation Authority, as well as any of the other local authorities to ensure that they are safe.

I also would like to inform the House of the conversations—many conversations, actually—that I've had with constituents who have brought concerns to my attention with respect to climate change. I have three very vocal and interested constituents who have come to see me

quite frequently to talk about the suggestions and the initiatives of the Citizens' Climate Lobby—which is, I think, a worldwide organization, but there is a Canadian chapter. Those constituents are Gord Cumming, Liz Armstrong and Ron Moore. They came to see me most recently on February 9. They've given me a lot of really interesting research that has been done on this issue. I really want to express my appreciation for the time that they take to study the issue—I think they're going about it in a very non-partisan and professional way—and then to bring in turn the latest updated academic research that they would want me to read.

They brought to my attention a study that was done by Dr. David Robinson, who is a professor at Laurentian University in Sudbury, about carbon pricing. It is something I would commend to all members of the Legislature who are interested in this issue, because what they are proposing is not a cap-and-trade program. In fact, they don't believe that's the best way, but they believe that a carbon-fee-and-dividend approach is the best way to not only have a fair system but also to reduce emissions effectively. I think it is something that has informed our thinking on this side of the House and it has what led, in large part, to our position that we took in the People's Guarantee.

Now, again, the government's objective this afternoon is to try to sow discord and cast aspersions on the opposition parties—in particular, the official opposition—on this issue. I'm certainly prepared to acknowledge the fact that our People's Guarantee platform, after extensive consultation with our membership and with people all across the province, was introduced to the people of Ontario on November 25. Since that time, of course, our leader has resigned, our leadership process has commenced, and there continues to be discussion about these issues—and there will be. That's expected and that's normal when there is a leadership campaign.

The various candidates will take their various positions, and someone will emerge as the leader. I hope that our party picks the right person. I have my choice.

Mr. Bill Walker: Me too.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I think we all do. But we would hope that we could move forward then and provide a strong official opposition in the time that we have available. Then, of course, we prepare for the election campaign, when we all go to the people with our respective positions, platforms, ideas and suggestions. Then we have, of course, that wonderful process called a provincial election, and then perhaps a new Legislature is elected. We will see how that plays out. But what's happening within our party—once a leadership process is initiated, of course, there is a debate, and it's not anything to surprise anybody.

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I have spoken in the Legislature on this issue, last fall. I was quite happy to talk about our party's position, and here's what I said on November 29. In fact, I was quite excited to see that the Toronto Star had in fact endorsed, at least to some degree, what we were saying in the

People's Guarantee. They called it “a serious plan that will deserve serious consideration from voters.” At this time, I said, “Included in this plan are strong statements about the need to protect and preserve our natural environment. Our caucus accepts the scientific consensus on climate change. The earth is warming, and human activity is a significant contributing factor. We in Ontario need to do our part to reduce carbon emissions.” I continue to believe that. I think all the members of the House accept that as sort of a bedrock statement on this issue.

But we also pointed out the government's plan for a cap-and-trade scheme will ship approximately “466 million taxpayer dollars to California. Our caucus categorically rejects that approach. But we also know that doing nothing is not an option.” We were aware, and still are, that the Trudeau government in Ottawa appears to be moving forward to mandate a “carbon-pricing benchmark.” I said that no one likes new taxes or new fees, and nobody wants them, but at the same time, I think it's a practical reality that all provinces are going to have to respond if the federal government pursues this approach, and that certainly appears to be what the federal government is planning to do.

We said that we believe that there is a better way for the people of Ontario, and that if the federal government is forcing this on us, we're suggesting that “every dollar collected in carbon price revenue should be returned to Ontario families and taxpayers in the form of corresponding tax relief, as verified by the Auditor General.”

I would suggest, Madam Speaker, that we need to ensure that the Auditor General has all the information that he or she needs. We know that the current government is in a fairly significant dispute with the Auditor General over accounting standards, and we on this side of the House have accepted the approach taken by the Auditor General, who's an independent, non-partisan officer of the Legislature. We believe that the points she's making are valid ones. We believe the government should not be challenging the Auditor General in terms of what she's saying and in terms of what should be accepted accounting practices for our government. Her role is obviously very, very important, and I think in terms of validating the fact that if there is carbon pricing of any sort, that it is in fact revenue-neutral. To have that seal of approval from the Auditor General would do a great deal to ensure that the people of Ontario actually believe it is revenue-neutral.

I talked about that on November 29, and then the following week, before the House rose in December, I again brought up my concerns as our party's environment critic, suggesting that, of course, “the Liberal government is prepared to say literally anything to hang on to power.” The Premier had criticized our proposal to phase out their cap-and-trade program and replace it with a carbon-pricing program in line with what the Trudeau government is requiring but that at the same time would return all of the revenue to Ontarians. She was suggesting it would cost more and would not be as effective in reducing carbon emissions.

But there was a huge article you may recall, Madam Speaker, in Maclean's magazine which showed that those claims were patently false. In fact, the article, with credible evidence, suggested that the People's Guarantee would do the exact opposite. There was a study by economist Trevor Tombe suggesting that our plan at the time would leave Ontario households better off than what the Liberals say and would reduce emissions more in Ontario than under their cap-and-trade program.

Again, I think as we get close to the election, the Liberals are going to be making a lot of statements and observations, but we know that the Liberal Party is prepared to do and say whatever it takes to get into power, stay in power, to hang on to power. I would suggest that the people of Ontario are going to take a good, hard look at some of these statements.

As you know, Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, our party is in the midst of a leadership process. That's no secret. Everyone who is paying attention knows about it. The Liberal government, because they lack a legislative agenda, are trying to bring forward these government motions. The two that were tabled yesterday, the one we debated this morning and this one we're debating this afternoon, are intended to try to create—

Ms. Deborah Matthews: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): What is your point of order?

Ms. Deborah Matthews: The MPP keeps referring to us—blaming us for not having a legislative agenda. The fact is they are blocking us from debating what we should be blocking.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): I do not believe that's a point of order. Thank you.

Continue, please.

Mr. Ted Arnott: It was a point of something—perhaps a point of information.

I would say to the member for London—

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Arnott:—London West, who served for many years in the cabinet and who knows something about the rules of the House, having served in this House since 2003, that it is certainly within the rules of the Legislature and the standing orders for opposition parties or, I would say, opposition members to bring forward reasoned amendments. It's part of the legislative process.

If she's suggesting that opposition parties don't have a right to table amendments to bills or to table amendments to motions—if she thinks that, I'd be rather surprised that she would take that approach.

She never served in opposition, so perhaps we need to explain to her that it is the role of the official opposition to sometimes challenge the government, to force the government to answer the questions and to force the government to consider the drawbacks and flaws—

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Arnott: London North Centre; I apologize to the member.

It's the role of the opposition to consider the flaws and drawbacks of their legislative program, whom they're

overlooking and whose interests are being heard. That's the role of the opposition in democratic societies. To suggest that we are blocking the debate of a bill that the government has brought forward—what in fact we have done is table reasoned amendments to ensure that we're doing our job as opposition.

There's this one bill that she's talking about where we've put forward the reasoned amendments, and I would suggest and submit that it is entirely appropriate and fitting that the opposition party use the rules within the standing orders of the Legislature to ensure that these issues are considered before final decisions are made.

Again, as we continue to discuss and debate these issues within our leadership process—of course, we will see an end on March 10, and then we will continue to bring forward our ideas, our best suggestions for immediate government action in the interval before the election, but, of course, working on a platform.

I look forward to this debate as it continues to unfold, Madam Speaker. I know that my friend and colleague the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound is ready and willing to participate as well, so I want to turn over the floor over to him.

I want to thank you very much, Madam Speaker. You've done a great job in the chair this afternoon—on short notice, I gather—and we want to thank you for your service as Acting Speaker this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): I recognize the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to start off my remarks today by saying thank you to our member for Wellington-Halton Hills. He always comes prepared—a very balanced thought process. He had lots of facts and lots of resources here. He has served not only his community but this province with distinction for many years, and I believe we all owe him a debt of gratitude for that.

Mr. Robert Bailey: The Order of Ontario.

Mr. Bill Walker: The Order of Ontario would be in order for Ted Arnott, absolutely.

He's so humble that he didn't mention in there that he, actually, with his PMB, really pushed forward on the whole Canada 150 and that planting of the 150,000 trees. He acknowledged the county of Wellington, but he, too, has stepped up.

He brought a very valid point that, had the government of the day, the Liberal government, actually put some of the money from their self-serving politically motivated partisan electioneering ads, we could have gone well past that goal, to ensure that and truly show action for the environment rather than just some hot air that went into the environment.

He talked about the cap-and-trade realities of Europe and what was tried there and the poor record that happened there that was overly bureaucratic. A lot of money went to California. Proceeds would go into a Liberal slush fund that they could use wherever they want. The sad part, that I hear from people across the province, is they see that money being used—instead of for things

like mental health, long-term care or social and community services—for the some of the waste and mismanagement fiascos that we've heard about in this House.

I think he spoke about, again—the Auditor General talked to it—that there could be more done to improve performance. In the report that came out, it said a lot of the things that the government has put out lack clarity, Madam Speaker. So, again, it isn't just us as opposition; it's us utilizing the knowledge that we've gained from independent officers of this House that have brought that.

1700

He talked about Hydro One. They actually, with this government's support, purchased a coal plant from the United States. He talked about how 50% of the pollution in the air in Ontario actually comes from the US. So they go on and on and on about coal—I think he reiterated, as well, that one of our former members, the very esteemed Elizabeth Witmer, was the first minister to actually announce the closure of Lakeview generating station. The Liberals came to power and promised to close all plants by 2007—another broken promise, Madam Speaker. Those were not actually closed until 2014 or 2015, yet they keep coming back to us. Premier Davis was one of the first people to move the environmental movement with a lot of initiatives across this great province.

It was interesting to hear about the Auditor General. One of the things that we've said from day one when we've had this discussion is that nobody is denying that there is a need to move forward and to do that. Particularly, what he referenced were his three children and, hopefully, someday grandchildren. I'm the same. I have two boys and I hope that someday we'll have grandchildren, to have a better province than what we have today. But what we need is to make sure that that money isn't just being used for those slush fund types of activities, or other endeavours. We want to make sure that it actually is revenue-neutral and that people of Ontario know what they're getting. I think it made great sense that the Auditor General could verify all those resources and revenue sources coming in, and ensure that it's returned to the people of Ontario.

We want to make sure that we're not getting into, as the current Liberals are, fighting with someone like our Auditor General—a third party, at arm's length from the government, an officer of this Legislature—and challenging accepted auditing principles. Madam Speaker, we really owe it to the people we serve to ensure that we trust those people and that we allow them to move forward when they're bringing up concerns in regard to something as significant as accepted auditing principles. That should raise alarm bells with everyone out there, Madam Speaker.

I also want to, just before I move on to another thought process, ask the government—conservation authorities have been here a number of times. Dick Hibma is a fellow from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. He's been the chair, I believe, of the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority for 20-plus years, and he is the chair of Conserva-

tion Ontario. They have had numerous discussions. They've lobbied us here—not just me in my riding, but all of us and, I'm sure, the Liberal government.

Those funding levels have been frozen for many, many, many years. For a government that talks about environment, here is an agency that actually does great work out in all of our communities, to ensure that the environmental concerns are addressed, and yet they have flat-lined them for many, many, many years, Madam Speaker. That group has come numerous times with budget requests saying, "Please up the amount that you're going to give us, so we can continue to do even more work." They download all kinds of things—"You shall, you will"—and this will become another regulation, more red tape and administration. But they never give any money there.

So I want to do a huge shout-out personally to Dick Hibma, who has done a great job in 20 years of service on the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority, for all that he has done. I want to carry that message on his behalf to the government again, because there is a budget, I trust. Well, it's probably written, I would guess. We'll see when that is actually put here in the House, or whether we actually even debate it. I hope that if they're truly sincere about this, we actually do this.

We want to talk a little bit again about this whole theory, and one of the challenges that we've had in regard to whatever we want to call it: the cap-and-trade, or the carbon taxes. They talk about all of the money coming back to Ontario. I believe it was the Minister of Agriculture—I'm going to quote, because I believe what he said was that every dollar raised goes back into the Ontario economy.

Madam Speaker, I want to ask him some things about if those polluting companies can buy carbon tax credits from a company on the market. They may be anywhere. They could be in California, because I heard "California" about a dozen times when the ministers on the other side of the House were speaking. They can buy the credits, but they never actually have to stop creating any of the pollution. So all of those pollutants that we're worried about keep going up into our atmosphere, but they can actually pay money to get it there, and it's going to be millions and billions of dollars, Madam Speaker, that actually supports the California economy, not the Ontario economy.

Mr. Robert Bailey: In US dollars.

Mr. Bill Walker: In US dollars, even more so.

When the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change spoke, he made a comment about us challenging the Prime Minister. It's interesting, Madam Speaker, because I have stood in this House, or sat in this House, and listened many times when the Liberal government challenged then-Prime Minister Stephen Harper. I'd like to ask the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change if he's in agreement with the veterans out there who, right now, are challenging the Prime Minister of the day on how he's treating our veterans who have given their lives for us and who have actually sacrificed and

gone to war for us—whether they have the right to challenge the Prime Minister or not.

The Minister of Ag, again, talked about a number of things. He talked about gaps, and he talked about Houdini. Madam Speaker, I'd like to ask him—\$4 billion was actually moved purposely by this government on to the OPG's set of financial books so they could say that they balanced the budget, ironically, in the next election we're going to have on June 7. The Auditor General has challenged those accounting principles, and yet he uses the word "Houdini" about us in here. I think the people of Ontario might wish to ask that type of a question.

I wonder how the Minister of Agriculture can support spending \$11 billion on interest payments as a result of their overspending. That's more than the whole community and social services budget spends on behalf of the province of Ontario. Those are the people in need, the people out there across all of our great communities who need help in their time of need. Yet, he continually supports overspending and spending the third-biggest government expenditure, being debt payment, and they just added—Madam Speaker, as I trust you're well aware—\$25 billion more. They went out, knowing all of this is happening, and borrowed \$25 billion to give a two-year rebate on hydro rates that actually increased between 300% and 400% over the term of their tenure over the last 12 to 14 years.

I wonder whether that gap is something that he might wish to address in the House sometime and explain to the people of Ontario how he can support borrowing \$25 billion, which is going to cost, down the road, \$43 billion to \$93 billion, again according to the Auditor General. This isn't me making these up. The fiscal accountability officer and the Auditor General have used those numbers. When you look at the great pages sitting here in front of us, who are going to actually incur this debt burden, how can you comfortably do that over there and then still come out and say things like we're the ones like Houdini?

Madam Speaker, I'd like the Minister of Ag—because he talked a fair bit about this stuff—to come back at some point and share with the Legislature and the great people of Ontario how much the Liberals have paid to the US and Quebec to take surplus energy. A number that I certainly continue to hear is \$6 billion that they've paid to Quebec and the US to actually work against our economy. We don't give it away. We actually pay them to take it—\$6 billion. We've been closing schools. You're a former school teacher, Madam Speaker. We've been closing schools, but we're paying \$6 billion out to economies to make them more competitive against our own people here. I'm not certain how that gap is something he could support.

I'd like to ask how many jobs were created by the Green Energy Act. There were large numbers when they brought this out—and let's not forget that with that policy they usurped local autonomy. They usurped the ability for local councils to actually make a choice and the people who elect them to have a choice of whether

they want wind turbines in their backyard or don't want them in their backyard. They did a lot of it saying, "We're going to create all of these jobs." I'd like them to give us a definitive number that's against the number they originally gave when they brought the Green Energy Act out.

Mr. Robert Bailey: About 50,000, I thought.

Mr. Bill Walker: About 50,000; 40,000 or 50,000 jobs. I'm not certain that you could even be kind and gracious to say 10% of those were created. They're certainly not long-term jobs like we have with our nuclear plants that are 24/7, baseload, clean, green energy.

It's interesting when we're talking about this, because when you're talking environment, the one thing that gets missed in this House a lot, and certainly out in the public, I think, is the Liberal government authorizes the water to not be captured at Niagara Falls—three cents a kilowatt. So we can either use wind energy at about 15 cents a kilowatt, or solar, in its earliest iterations at 82 cents a kilowatt, now 40 to 42 cents, and it's still intermittent. You then fire up a gas plant to actually bring the power back when you do need it.

I try to figure out, from an environmental perspective, how can you, with clear conscience, suggest you're going to turn off Niagara Falls and not capture clean, free, green energy sources and actually do the other side and support turning on a gas plant? It makes no sense to me, especially when you consider three cents to 82 cents in the earlier iterations of that Green Energy Act.

I'd like the Minister of Agriculture to share with the great people of Ontario how much the global adjustment has cost the people and particularly the businesses of the province, because those businesses need to be able to be effective. They could be putting that money into more energy-efficient operation. They could be doing things that are containing and limiting their actual environmental footprint. But when they're paying it into a tax because they have overpaid for subsidies for certain forms of power, then I wonder how much that is, and I wonder how much that total dollar value is at the end of the day.

1710

I know when the first debate came out about carbon, it was asked in this House if they would put a line item on the energy bills of what the cost of carbon was going to be, and they declined that. We wonder why they would decline that. And we also wonder, if they would decline that, why would they, again, not allow this to go under the auspices of the Auditor General, to be able to truly take all of those revenue sources and be the verification point, and make a pledge to ensure that the people of Ontario know that it's revenue-neutral and that if they're paying it out, it's coming back in some form of service to all of the people of Ontario, who are actually responsible and are going to be the most impacted by that.

Switching gears a little bit, I go back, because of what has happened—and I believe my colleague very appropriately acknowledged the sadness shared for the little fellow who was lost in the river recently and to all of the

family who are going through that. Again, I send out a message to all people: The waters are running fast. Do not allow anyone to go. Even adults should not be going close to that fast-rushing water. Just in Chesley, Ontario, in my riding, one of the bridge abutments has collapsed partially because of the raised water levels and flooding conditions. With everyone out there, we're going through that time right now—spring runoff or whatever we want to call it. It's happening, so I just implore everyone to be very, very cautious and ensure that we don't have to have any more of these tragedies.

But it brings me back to a few years ago, with a similar type of situation. Owen Sound suffered major losses in 2015, with water mains being frozen. It was unprecedented: 317 frozen services and 50 water main breaks, costing the city \$2.1 million to remedy. The government led us to believe that it would be there for municipalities when they needed it the most from these climate-type disasters. If you're going to charge things like a carbon tax, you would expect, and I think the people of Ontario would say, that in those types of times, you want to know that that money collected from carbon tax is going back into other types of environmental challenges that the people are suffering. After all, there is only one taxpayer. Whether it's municipal, provincial or federal, there is only one taxpayer.

When we asked on behalf of Owen Sound, the government said no. In fact, it really did nothing to help Owen Sound constituents, despite there being a strong case for that disaster relief assistance. In the end, Owen Sound managed to replace about 1.5 kilometres of water mains. But as you can imagine, the crisis emptied their reserve fund. In a very small tax base, over years, they were doing that.

Again, there has been a lot of gas tax money that my colleague John Yakabuski from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has asked about, I think, eight or nine times in

here. Regrettably, again, the Liberals have voted against that every time. So that could have been shared across the whole province, and there would have been more money in the actual coffers of Owen Sound to do this.

At the end of the day, it's very challenging for a small tax base to be able to accumulate the things to replace all of that infrastructure, and it puts great limits on their ability to respond to these types of unexpected things. It took the city 10 years to build up that reserve and only a few days without assistance to empty it. Those are the types of things for which, I think, regardless of political stripe, people want to know that in times of need your government is there for you and they're going to come to step up for you. I'm sure, this past winter, there have been municipalities in a very similar boat. Many of the municipalities have had their own funding actually decreased and, again, will suffer from some of this type of thing.

When we're looking at things in regard to how we're taxed and where taxation is used, you want to make sure that it comes to you and it's there in time to help those people out. Whether you want to say the municipality, the county, the regional government or the people of the province, it's about people, Madam Speaker. We need to ensure that our government is always putting the people first. It brings me back a little bit to the thought from my colleague from Wellington–Halton Hills in regard to that—and it's blatant at the end of the day.

Debate deemed adjourned.

Mr. Bill Walker: Madam Speaker, at this point, I would like to move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Ann Hoggarth): Mr. Walker has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

We stand adjourned until Monday, February 26, 2018, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1715.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	

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Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
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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 Advanced Education and Skills Development / Ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Formation professionnelle
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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
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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
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MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of the Status of Women / Ministre de la condition féminine
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
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 Transportation / Ministre des Transports
McMahon, Hon. / L'hon. Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	Minister Responsible for Digital Government / Ministre responsable de l'Action pour un gouvernement numérique President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
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
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research, Innovation and Science / Ministre de la Recherche, de l'Innovation et des Sciences
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Naidoo-Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	Halton	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation 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)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
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, Hon. / L'hon. Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
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	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Vacant	Parkdale–High Park	
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 / Président: Vacant
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Michael Mantha
Granville Anderson, James J. Bradley
Bob Delaney, Catherine Fife
Michael Harris, Monte Kwinter
Michael Mantha, Mario Sergio
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**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
Brad Duguid, Ann Hoggarth
Lisa MacLeod, 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: Arthur Potts
Yvan Baker, Grant Crack
Lisa Gretzky, Sophie Kiwala
Sam Oosterhoff, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi, Lisa M. Thompson
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Brad Duguid, Wayne Gates
Sophie Kiwala, Cristina Martins
Sam Oosterhoff, Randy Pettapiece
Shafiq Qadri
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Amrit Mangat
Jim McDonnell, Arthur Potts
Shafiq Qadri, Ross Romano
Liz Sandals, Monique Taylor
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permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Robert Bailey, James J. Bradley
Joe Dickson, Amrit Mangat
Michael Mantha, Deborah Matthews
Monte McNaughton, Laurie Scott
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bob Delaney, Vic Dhillon
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Randy Hillier, Lisa MacLeod
Liz Sandals
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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Ann Hoggarth, Gila Martow
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Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley