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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 8 March 2018

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 8 mars 2018

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FAIRNESS IN PROCUREMENT ACT, 2018
LOI DE 2018 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ EN MATIÈRE
DE MARCHÉS PUBLICS

Mr. Ballard, on behalf of Ms. McMahon, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 194, An Act respecting fairness in procurement /
Projet de loi 194, Loi concernant l'équité en matière de
marchés publics.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister has moved third reading of Bill 194.

Minister.

Hon. Chris Ballard: Speaker, I believe the minister will be here shortly to make her remarks.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate? I recognize the member from Sault Ste. Marie.

Mr. Ross Romano: Good morning, Madame Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to rise and speak with respect to Bill 194. Last week, I spoke with respect to this matter and I had some harsh words with respect to Bill 194. I think they were entirely fair. The concern I had and have with Bill 194 is this: At the time that it was being enacted, we knew that the US DOC had recommendations to President Trump with respect to Bill 232.

That particular bill was considering three options with respect to trade tariffs which Canada could be subject to. The concern I raised with the government was that Bill 194 was an antagonistic measure in response to something happening in New York.

While there may be some merit to that as an option of last resort, as a starting point it is imperative that we try a diplomatic approach to deal with our friends in the US, to try to encourage President Trump to consider other alternatives, specifically with reference to Bill 232. The reason why I said that was in Bill 232, there are three options that were presented to President Trump. Now, it's really interesting to note the dates. As of last Wednesday, the recommendations to President Trump were to be considered on April 11 or thereafter. We stood in this House and debated at length about the effect of poking the President in the eye when something as detrimental to Canadian steel—and let's just digress here for a moment.

We have three integrated steel producers in our country, all of which are located in Ontario and one of which is located in my community of Sault Ste. Marie. The Sault Ste. Marie steel market cannot survive two of the three options presented by Ross in Bill 232. My suggestion, my strong encouragement to the government last Wednesday, was, "Let us not poke the President of the United States in the eye. Let us have meaningful and diplomatic negotiations with him to demonstrate to the President that the US economy requires ours as much as we need them."

At that time, I had already reached out to State Senator Schmidt in Michigan. He shared my concerns. Thereafter, I spoke with the senator, and he is very worried that Michigan, his home state, will immediately proceed into a recession if Algoma in Sault Ste. Marie closes. The Upper Peninsula in Michigan relies heavily on the tourism industry which comes from our community in Sault Ste. Marie. They rely heavily on providing Sault Ste. Marie's Algoma mill with the raw materials to produce steel. Many communities in Michigan will fold if my community of Sault Ste. Marie folds.

The auto sector, Detroit, will be hit incredibly hard. Minnesota will be hit hard. Wisconsin will be hit hard. The Virginias will be hit hard. There are a number of states in the US that will suffer dramatically if Canada suffers as a result of these trade tariffs.

My strong encouragement to the government last Wednesday was that this is not the time for poking the President of the US in the eye. It is the time to be diplomatic and reach out to our friends. On Thursday, I stood up and made a member's statement and said, "Let us all make one phone call. If we split up a list of names and we all make one phone call and demonstrate to a person south of the border in power what this tariff will do to their country, to their economy, to the people they represent, that is the way we will resolve this issue with the US over trade, and steel in particular."

I find it very interesting, and a little too coincidental, that we sat here on Wednesday—a full month and a half before President Trump was supposed to make a decision on Bill 232—and on Thursday, the very next day, a full month and a half before he was supposed to make his decision, President Trump announced that he was not even going to proceed with any of the recommendations that the DOC presented to him. In fact, he took it a step further. Option 1 under Bill 232 suggested a 24% tariff on steel and a 10% tariff on aluminum. President Trump decided to go with a 25% tariff on steel, and it's expected

that that decision will be announced later today and made official.

My community cannot sustain that tariff. My community will not be able to survive. There will be 2,800-plus people in Sault Ste. Marie who will be unemployed. There will be 6,000-plus people on pension in Sault Ste. Marie who will not be able to find work and will not receive their pensions. The indirect spinoff: There are another 6,500 people in Sault Ste. Marie that have indirect employment within our steel plant. They will lose their work. In a community of 72,000-plus people, imagine the effect of 6,000-plus pensioners no longer having income and no longer being able to find employment, and 3,000 people, almost, losing full-time employment with a median wage of \$80,000-plus a year. Imagine another 6,500 people that will lose their employment as a result of the indirect employment they obtain out of the steel plant.

The effects are highly detrimental to my community, but it will flow. Other communities in the north will not be able to survive. A number of our employees at Algoma Steel work in the surrounding areas outside of Sault Ste. Marie; a number of the pensioners reside outside of Sault Ste. Marie. I said last week that mills like Domtar in Espanola and EACOM in Nairn Centre will not be able to survive, because there will no longer be train access, because Huron Central Railway will shut down. This has such a serious effect.

0910

I appreciate the government's efforts with respect to Bill 194; I appreciate the process that was considered. I'm curious if the Premier attempted, and I hope she did, to reach out to the state officials in New York before resorting to Bill 194. I would be encouraged to know whether or not those attempts were made, and I would like to know what the fruits of those discussions were, because I'm sure our Premier would have sought to speak with those state officials in New York before resorting to Bill 194. I would like to know what stemmed from those discussions, but notwithstanding, it was premature. We had a month and a half to address Bill 232, because that is the bigger risk. And you know what? That risk is now in front of us. That risk is real, and it has my community shaking. It has many communities shaking within this country and the other steel markets within Ontario. And it has people in the US shaking.

There is room for Bill 194 as an option of last resort, but I still beg all of my friends—

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: That's what it is.

Mr. Ross Romano: I am not playing games.

Interjection.

Mr. Ross Romano: If you, Minister, picked up the phone and called a member in the United States and said, "This will hurt your economy," if we all work together and stop with these games—stop with the games. If you think that the right approach to negotiations is to punch the President of the United States in the mouth, you are so sadly wrong, but—

Interjection.

Mr. Ross Romano: If you'll notice, I don't read notes. I would like to see you do the same.

But at this time, Speaker, I am content to end my comments on the matter. I think I've said enough. It's just a matter of whether they will listen.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to rise in this House and speak on behalf of my constituents in Timiskaming–Cochrane and my NDP colleagues and their constituents across the province, particularly on this bill, Bill 194, the Fairness in Procurement Act.

We understand the need for legislation to protect workers. We have some serious concerns with some of the context around this bill. The principle of the bill, we could support, but there are several issues with this legislation, particularly when you look at the greater context. When I made the opening statement, the response to the minister—perhaps my most quoted statement in the House since I've been here—it's: This is not the time to poke the President in the eye. Really, this isn't the time to do that. This isn't the time to do that. The government has chosen to do that—as a legislator, something that's perhaps even more telling and egregious.

So today we've got the francophone youth Parliament here. Often I go to schools and I explain how the legislative process works: The government introduces a bill, first reading, second reading, it goes to committee, where experts and lay people and people impacted, like people from the steel industry across this province, like workers across this province, auto workers across this province, people in the forestry sector, people in supply management—they could all be impacted, indirectly and directly, by this legislation. The government says this legislation is to protect workers. We say we have to be cognizant and recognize its impact on all workers. The way that is supposed to happen in our system is: After second reading, a bill goes to committee, which hears the opinions of the people of the province who are impacted by the legislation. Amendments are put forward. Then, it goes to third reading, where it is again fully debated, and obviously, with a government majority, it will pass.

If used or interpreted incorrectly, the impact of this legislation could be international—obviously, its impact will be international. But some of the impact, the collateral damage of this legislation—I don't think any of us can really gauge what that's going to be. The best way to gauge that is to ask experts to come to committee and comment on the legislation. That's how our parliamentary system is built—but not with this legislation. This legislation is having first, second and third reading with absolutely no input from anyone other than the governing party, which is now in the dying days of its term. Now is especially the time to make sure that its legislation is transparent and that all impacts are evaluated. In the last three months of their term, as a totally lame-duck government, they now have decided to put forward legislation without any input from the public, from impacted workers and, quite frankly, from this House.

There has been no opportunity to put forward amendments. It's one thing if we—the opposition parties and the government—can put forward amendments and they are debated and rejected, which happens here all the time. It always frustrates us, because we don't have the mandate. In a majority government, the governing party has a mandate; they put forward legislation. It's our role to criticize. It's also our role to put forward amendments to make the legislation better on behalf of the people of Ontario and on behalf of the people we represent. So we're often frustrated that we put forward amendments and the government routinely doesn't accept any. That's frustrating. But in this case, the government has put forward a time allocation motion that strips the whole process altogether. This legislation came from the Premier's office. The rest of the whole process on this piece of legislation is, quite frankly, a sham. No changes are going to be made, no matter what anyone says in this House, because there was no committee process.

Often, when time allocation motions are put forward, we raise the issue that committees should travel across the province so that people across the province will have a chance to have input on proposed legislation. That's almost always not the case. The committee hearings are held in Toronto. We often criticize the government for seeming to be more cognizant of the wishes of the folks who live close to Queen's Park than the outsiders of the province. That's also the case with this. The folks who work in steel in Sault Ste. Marie—they obviously don't have a care in the world about them. If they actually had allowed a committee to sit and talk about it, they should have gone to the Soo, to Hamilton, to places like that, that are going to be impacted, perhaps, by the collateral damage of this bill. They should have toured the forestry sector in northern Ontario. They are very worried about the trade negotiations that are happening right now and about the collateral damage that this bill can have.

0920

But in this case, we don't even have to mention that they didn't travel to other parts of the province. With this piece of legislation, it's obvious that the Liberal government of the day doesn't care about anyone, or anyone's opinion, whether it be lay or expert, other than their own opinion. It's very obvious, Speaker. With this piece of legislation, the only people that the Liberals truly care about are themselves and their own interests. If that wasn't the case, they would be happy to have committee hearings and hear from trade experts, from experts in various industries and from procurement experts; to talk about the best way to implement this type of legislation and how it could best be done. They would be more than happy to do that. But, Speaker, they're not. They have truncated, they have kiboshed the whole process. There are no committee hearings—none. Not even an attempt to talk to the public—none.

This open and transparent government—that was the last campaign; now they're the fairness government. Where is the openness and transparency when you take out the committee process? You just take it out. They're

not only poking the President in the eye, they're poking everybody in the eye because, quite frankly, they don't seem to care. They care about themselves. This bill may very well not be about the next election, but it certainly appears to be so because they've made absolutely no attempt to make sure that it's done correctly. They've made no attempt.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Zero.

Mr. John Vanthof: Zero. Again, we support the principle of making sure that all sectors are treated equally, and we support the principle of this bill. But the problem is the way this government is forcing this legislation through, and we have known, as we've got examples from the past, that the collateral damage from this government's decisions, sometimes, is just unfathomable.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: On a point of order, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Point of order.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I'm really sorry to do this. I have two guests in the gallery right now who may not be here for question period, so I just want to quickly introduce them. Aftab and Faiz Qureshi are visiting from Markham. I welcome them to Queen's Park.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I rise in the House today to join in third reading debate for the proposed Fairness in Procurement Act, 2018. Unfortunately, Speaker, I'm delayed in giving this speech because the official opposition, while it struggles with their own internal affairs, have chosen to delay the important work of this House with procedural tricks and obstructionist delays. However, we are here to talk about something important: our work to protect Ontario businesses and made-in-Ontario jobs.

Recently a tide of protectionism and protectionist sentiments has risen across America. Whether it's the unfair NAFTA negotiations, discriminatory Buy American legislation or the new proposed steel tariffs that would severely tax any imports to the US, one thing remains clear: Our partners south of the border have no intention of exempting Canadian workers and businesses from the impacts of their economic nationalism. That's why we have to be prepared to respond to these unfair policies. We have to stand up for our workers and our businesses. This bill does exactly that.

It would be irresponsible of the government to allow US states—and I want to emphasize here, we're talking about states; this is a province-to-state interaction, not a national trade interaction, which of course we have no jurisdiction over.

But it would be irresponsible of our government to allow US states to continue winning public procurement contracts in Ontario while our own businesses are shut out by state laws from similar opportunities in those American states. This is why we need to pass the Fairness in Procurement Act, because, as the government of Ontario, we do control public procurement in Ontario. That's the thing that this bill addresses: public procurement in Ontario. When Ontario taxpayers spend money,

we should have a fair playing field vis-à-vis the US states across the border. It will act as a powerful deterrent and, as a last resort, would allow us to level the playing field.

I want to share with the House the relationship that we have with our partners in the US. Hopefully, this will provide more insight into why we are proposing this piece of legislation. Speaker, in 2015-16, the Ontario government awarded more than 500 US-based businesses with contracts worth approximately \$460 million. A third of this, approximately \$160 million, went to 77 New York-based corporations. Ontario's economic success is linked to our strong business relationship with the US, but this isn't just a competitive advantage for our province; our partnership underpins the competitiveness of this entire region. Both Ontario and New York state benefit enormously from a strong and integrated partnership that supports good jobs on both sides of the border.

Yet, as we know, New York state and Texas state have passed Buy American legislation, which undermines the spirit of our partnership and gives their businesses and workers an unfair edge. We are concerned that other states are considering similar proposals. In the face of these developments, our government cannot and will not stand idly by and have Ontario businesses discriminated against. While we do not think it is optimal, we want the US to know that we are ready and willing to respond if necessary.

We are fully committed to standing up for Ontario businesses, and I encourage the opposition and the third party to get some backbone and join us in doing so too. This is not something to make political, and, frankly speaking, I do not think it is fair when the parties opposite spend debate time finding that it is. This is about hard-working Ontarians and protecting the jobs of hard-working Ontarians. Our government will continue to advocate for open, transparent and competitive procurement and to stand up for the well-being of Ontario workers.

That's why our Premier has met or spoken with nearly 40 US governors to talk about the benefits of our partnership. Think about that: Almost 40 of the US governors have spoken with Premier Kathleen Wynne. I am proud to stand beside a Premier who continues to lead advocacy efforts when it comes to protecting Ontarians. It ultimately resulted in New York state scaling back its Buy American legislation to be less harmful than earlier versions of their proposed Buy American legislation.

But, Speaker, it's not enough from our partners south of the border. Our government will stand up for Ontario workers and businesses, especially in the face of US protectionism. We're sending a clear message. Our US partners need to know that if they choose protectionism, we will respond. Our government has fought hard to protect the values we all hold dear and to protect the jobs that help sustain those values and our way of life. Our government has never been afraid to do whatever is necessary to stand up for the workers of Ontario.

Buy American protectionist policies at the state level can have an impact on vital economic sectors like construction, sectors that provide good-paying jobs to our

highly skilled workers and businesses that provide affordable goods and services to our citizens.

Our government believes in a level playing field for Ontario businesses and workers. We must protect Ontario businesses and Ontario jobs in the face of these harmful Buy American policies. We have been clear that if any state takes action to harm Ontario workers and businesses, we would respond in kind. That is why our government introduced the Fairness in Procurement Act, 2018, the bill that we are debating in third reading here today.

This legislation, if passed, would provide Ontario with an important tool to ensure our industries, our businesses and our workers are fairly treated. It would provide Ontario with the ability to quickly and decisively respond to US subnational jurisdictions—that is, states and municipalities—that uphold their own Buy American policies. I think it's important to note that first of all, the American subnational, the American state or municipality, would already have enacted their own Buy American legislation. The proposed Fairness in Procurement Act is also meant to discourage other US subnational jurisdictions, both at the state and the local level, from considering similar Buy American provisions.

The people of Ontario and New York state have benefited enormously from our close and integrated relationship. Our government would like to keep it that way. But now, our businesses are being blocked from bidding on US public procurement contracts, even though US businesses from New York state can bid on Ontario public procurement policies—public procurement paid for by Ontario taxpayers.

Our close relationship with many US states is measured beyond the value of goods and services that flow between our borders. It is a relationship that relies on its deeply interconnected economies, and we believe strongly in keeping it that way. Ontario and New York state have both benefited from this deep integration, from good jobs on both sides of the border to competitive growth and access to government procurement opportunities.

Beyond economic integration, we also share similar values—

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

Further debate? I recognize the member from Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Madam Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Ms. Martow has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

I believe the nays have it.

This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 0933 to 1003.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mrs. Martow has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 6; the nays are 24.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I declare the motion lost.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated March 5, 2018, I'm now required to put the question.

Mr. Ballard has moved third reading of Bill 194, An Act respecting fairness in procurement. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Third reading agreed to.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: A point of order: I heard a nay.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: There was a nay, Speaker.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 7, 2018, on the motion regarding climate change.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Ross Romano: With respect to this particular motion, the concern I have—that we have, and we should all have—is that there are a number of important matters that we need to address, and we're here speaking about this motion on climate change, which doesn't actually propose any kind of solution or plan—nothing. We're just identifying a problem that we already know exists. So I am curious: What is the solution that is being brought forward? We are not hearing it.

There are a number of initiatives that we can be undertaking to more appropriately utilize our time, but we're spending our time doing other things that, quite frankly, aren't helpful. But I'm happy to recognize the importance of climate change as an issue. I believe that the government's efforts through the cap-and-trade program are sorely lacking in that area. I do not believe that there is any sense in sending money from our province to foreign jurisdictions when we could use that money here in Ontario. We can use that money to assist businesses here in Ontario that are struggling.

Yesterday when I rose, I spoke about the climate change motion. I referenced some initiatives going on within my community that would make a significant impact on environment-related issues. I spoke about the Ellsintire plant in Sault Ste. Marie, which is being held up because of red tape. The Minister of the Environment refuses to grant an extension to a five-year permit to allow this plant to be viewed by investors.

Madam Speaker, this is an amazing opportunity in Sault Ste. Marie. We actually have the technology available where we could take tires, recycle them, break them down right to carbon black. We could produce new tires. It's not the recycling that exists to date. This is a great environmental initiative. Think of the amount of landfill space occupied by tires. Think about the disaster that

presents when fires occur. The environmental footprint is enormous. We have a solution, but because of government red tape my community cannot further that investment opportunity that would create jobs in my community and resolve a major environmental issue. It's proven.

We can't get an extension of a five-year permit so that these people, who have invested millions of dollars within my community—we can't get a permit so that they can just simply show this plant to potential investors. They need to be able to run it for 12 hours a month. Nobody is going to spend millions of dollars to purchase this technology and then operate a plant like this if they can't see it happen. They want to be able to watch a tire move across that belt, go through the ovens, get reduced, and they want to see that carbon black at the end. They're not going to be able to do that if we can't get a permit to operate for 12 hours.

The Minister of the Environment has said, "No, you can't get that permit unless you apply for a permanent permit." It doesn't make any sense. These are the types of things that are stifling our ability to grow jobs. It is stifling our opportunity to improve the environment—red tape. It would be nice if we were in this House speaking about actual initiatives that advance reducing our carbon footprint, actual initiatives that will make a difference, not just simply speaking about identifying a problem that we already know exists.

I spoke yesterday about the ferrochrome processing plant that Noront Resources wants to build in northern Ontario. This plant will create, just to build it, about 400 jobs; to operate it, about another 400 jobs; and an indirect spinoff of approximately 3 to 1, so potentially another 1,000 to 1,200 jobs within a community in northern Ontario. Sault Ste. Marie, Thunder Bay, Sudbury and Timmins have been asked to put proposals in.

I'm sure the member from Thunder Bay–Superior North, the minister, would be very happy to see 400 jobs in his community, and another 1,200 potential, indirect jobs. I know my community would be very, very happy to have those. I know Sudbury would be very happy, and I know Timmins would be very happy to see those jobs, but we're not going to be able to do it if we can't get the Ring of Fire development done. They can operate in an environmentally safe and responsible way. Those opportunities exist right within the north, to be able to grow jobs and still have it done in a safe and responsible way.

Let's imagine that Noront cannot develop the proper infrastructure. Well, they will still mine the resources, and those resources will be shipped off to China or other locations, like in South Africa, where there's a significant ferrochrome market. Those plants will turn that ore into ferrochrome and produce stainless steel. We will not see the benefits that those plants would provide to the environment if they operated within Ontario, within our environmental restrictions here in our province. If they are operating in some of these foreign markets where those restrictions do not apply, that carbon footprint is felt by the world. Whether you produce ferrochrome in Ontario or whether you make ferrochrome in India or China or

South Africa, the carbon footprint is felt around the world. If we really want to do something to help the environment, let's make sure that business is here in Ontario, so that at least we can control the carbon that is emitted from these places.

What do they need? They need a road. They also need some help on energy rates. Let's promise them that we'll give them six cents a kilowatt hour. Let's do something to incentivize these businesses to operate in Ontario, if we want to reduce their carbon footprint around the world. These are the types of the initiatives we can take.

It's unfortunate that we're here spending valuable time discussing a motion with no teeth, no solutions, no plan, while we have important things to address, very important matters that matter to our economy and matter to the environment—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Don't be so hard on the PC platform.

Mr. Ross Romano: I always appreciate comments that I hear from the other side, especially from the member from Etobicoke North. Last week, we were in here and he was talking about Belgium. He was talking about being happy to poke the President of the United States in the eye when we're talking about steel. Now he's talking here about the PC platform.

Interjections.

Mr. Ross Romano: It's unfortunate that the gamesmanship that is being played from that side of the floor is being played in the face of an election when there are important matters that matter—

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

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Seeing as it's 10:15, I'll be recessing the House until 1030.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

L'hon. Nathalie Des Rosiers: Je veux reconnaître, dans la galerie, les participants au Parlement des jeunes francophones. Bienvenue à Queen's Park. C'est très agréable de vous avoir ici.

Mr. Bill Walker: In our guest gallery today, we have Don and Beth Fountain from Meaford, from the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. They are hosting—and I'm proud to introduce—exchange students Kanako Miro from Japan and Linn Poggensee from Germany. Thank you very much, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Daiene Vernile: I'm delighted to welcome to Queen's Park some members from Wilfrid Laurier University whom I had the pleasure of meeting with this morning. They are Dr. Deborah MacLatchy, who is the president and vice-chancellor of Wilfrid Laurier, and Maria Papadopoulos, who is director of government relations.

I'd also like to welcome the father of page Abigail Eys. Mark Eys is in the gallery with us today.

Mr. Ross Romano: I rise today on behalf of my colleague who unfortunately couldn't be here today, the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, Jim McDonnell. I want to introduce a page from his community, Harrison Rozon, and his mother, Wendy Rozon, who is in the public gallery today. Thank you very much and welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd like to introduce two people in this particular one:

Premièrement, à nos amis du Parlement des jeunes qui sont ici aujourd'hui, on vous dit bienvenue à l'Assemblée.

But I have a very, very special friend who's here all the way, originally, from Fort Albany, but who now lives in Timmins, a very good friend of mine, Mike Metatawabin, who is here with other First Nations leaders and people in regard to the bill we're going to be voting on today.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Today, I would like to welcome, from my riding of Barrie, Sonya Jain and the president of the Simcoe County Elementary Teachers' Federation, Janet Bigham. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I've got a bit of a lengthy one here, and I do apologize in advance.

First I would like to introduce my page's mother, Fauzia Syed, who has joined me today. She will be joining me at lunch with the Prime Minister later, along with Aashaz.

I also have three female members of my staff here on International Women's Day: Valerie Cickello, Rebecca Hubble and Kayla Fernet.

But, Speaker, it's also very important for me to also have my family here. My mother has joined us from Nova Scotia; my husband, Joe, is here from Ottawa; and my little daughter, Victoria, who first sat in the Speaker's gallery when she had just turned one year old, is turning 13 on Monday.

Victoria, why don't you stand up? I want to wish you a happy birthday.

On this International Women's Day, I'll just remind the House that when she arrived here, we used to sit at 1 o'clock in the afternoon until midnight, we didn't have high chairs in the dining room, and we didn't have change tables. She was an inspiration to make this place family-friendly. On International Women's Day, I just wanted to recognize my sweet daughter. I love you.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Bien entendu, moi aussi, je veux souhaiter la bienvenue à tous les participants et participantes du Parlement jeunesse francophone. Bienvenue à Queen's Park. Je vais en nommer quelques-uns. Je commence avec Brook Morneau, du Collège Notre-Dame, et, bien entendu, Danielle LaBrun et Emily Ramsay, de Macdonald-Cartier. Je veux dire bonjour également à Liam Roche, que j'ai rencontré hier pour la première fois. Bienvenue à Queen's Park, tout le monde.

L'hon. Marie-France Lalonde: J'aimerais vraiment souhaiter la bienvenue encore une fois au Parlement jeunesse, la 12^e édition. Au nom du caucus d'Ottawa, nous vous souhaitons la bienvenue ici, et

particulièrement à certains jeunes qui viennent d'Orléans. J'aimerais reconnaître Clody Desjardins, Jasmine Desjardins, Olivier Tremblay-Venneri et M. Chris Simba, qui est le premier ministre. Je vous souhaite de belles sessions et de beaux débats. Bienvenue, et merci d'être ici avec nous pour la démocratie.

M^{me} Gila Martow: Je veux donner un très grand accueil du caucus PC à tous les jeunes parlementaires francophones qui sont ici. Merci beaucoup d'avoir chanté « Notre Place » hier soir.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Today is International Women's Day. I'd like to welcome the Hillcrest Elementary School grades 7 and 8 Girls Government program from my riding of Hamilton. They're going to be touring the Legislature and holding a press conference on pay equity later today. Their names are: Linda Turner, teacher and program coordinator; Laura Laverty, public health nurse and program coordinator; Danielle Harcourt, student; Shannon Duquette, student; Isabel Badeau, student; Anahy Manzanares, student; Morgan Virta, student; and Jackie Oakes, student. Welcome, women and young women. Thank you for being here.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm delighted to welcome to the gallery a student from the University of Toronto: Yayas Perera. I want to thank him for being here today.

I know that Minister Vernile already did this, but my very good friend and a constituent of mine is also with us today: Maria Papadopoulos. Great to see her here as well.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Before she leaves the building to go and receive her award, I wanted to introduce Lisa MacLeod, winner of the 2018 national EVE Award from Equal Voice.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have two students from my area here today with the francophone parliamentarian group: Steve Fotso and Felicia Owen. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'd like to welcome to the House Deborah MacLatchy. Deborah is president of Wilfrid Laurier University. Welcome to Queen's Park.

I'd also like to say a quick hello to Mary Papadopoulos.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from—it's blank again—Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Speaker, for recognizing me this morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Prince Edward—Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you; there we go. I would like to welcome the president of PEGO, which is Professional Engineers Government of Ontario: Ben Hendry, who joins us today. Welcome, Ben.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'd like to welcome, from Water Wells First, Kevin Jakubec and Bill Clarke; Mark Calzavara from the Council of Canadians; and Marc St. Pierre and Jessica Brooks. All are here to fight for safe and clean drinking water for their communities.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I have a few introductions to make. Speaker, as you know, Margot West is the very hard-working page from the great riding of Ottawa

Centre. I want to welcome her mother, Sara Ryan, and her twin sister, Bridget West, to Queen's Park.

Also joining us today is a young grade 11 student from the riding of Markham—Unionville who is doing a civics class project on how our Legislature works: Faiz Qureshi. He's here with his father, Aftab Qureshi.

Lastly, Speaker, I want to welcome Valarie Steele and Hewitt Loague from the Black Action Defence Committee, who are here to witness the vote on Bill 175.

M. Sam Oosterhoff: Je me lève pour mon cher collègue le député de Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, John Yakabuski, et je souhaite la bienvenue aux étudiants du Parlement jeunesse francophone: Anne Steepe et Clara Demers. Bienvenue.

M. Grant Crack: Il me fait un grand plaisir de souhaiter la bienvenue ce matin à deux étudiants de Glengarry—Prescott—Russell qui participent dans le Parlement jeunesse. On a Angelique van den Oetelaar, who is here aussi, and Max Langevin. Bienvenue aussi à Trevor Stewart. Bonne journée.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I too introduce the Professional Engineers Government of Ontario: vice-president Martin Haalstra from my riding, and Darsha Jethava are here. Also here, and he has already been introduced earlier as the new president, is Ben Hendry. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: I'd like to welcome guests in the east members' gallery: from 407 ETR, CEO Andres Sacristan, and the VP of marketing and communications, Kevin Sack. We had a very productive meeting this morning. Thanks for joining us today.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I would like to welcome Sabina Halappanavar, who is the mother of page Manas Gupta, from the riding of Carleton—Mississippi Mills.

1040

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I would like to extend a warm welcome to Terry Armstrong, the chief of police for the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, from Thunder Bay, and Fabian Batise, the board liaison for Nishnawbe Aski Nation. He is also the brother of our ADM in the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, Shawn Batise.

I would also like to extend a warm welcome—I know you've already been introduced—to Mike Metatawabin from Fort Albany.

And I would like to extend a warm welcome to two students qui viennent de Kingston et les Îles: Mathieu Symons et Simon Denford, qui sont ici pour l'assemblée parlementaire jeunesse de la francophonie. Bienvenue.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It gives me great pleasure to introduce four people from the great riding of Northumberland—Quinte West who are here at Queen's Park today: my good friend Lynn Hardy, Don Conway, Jessie Forbes and Tim Linehan. Welcome.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's my pleasure to introduce two constituents from Beaches—East York, Claire Stabins and Anne McEwen. They are here visiting their nephew and, I presume, cousin, Sullivan Pearson, who is a page here today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Harinder Malhi: I just want to take this opportunity to wish everybody a very happy International Women's Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a very important delegation: the Minister of Diaspora for Albania, Mr. Pandeli Majko, and the Minister of Diaspora for Kosovo, Mr. Dardan Gashi. They are accompanied by His Excellency Ermal Muça, the Ambassador of Albania to Canada, and His Excellency Lulzim Hiseni, the Ambassador of the Republic of Kosovo. Welcome and thank you for joining us. We appreciate your being here.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Given that the Conservatives have no interest in debating the motion on climate change, I'm seeking unanimous consent that a recorded division be immediately taken on government order number 42 concerning climate change, one of the greatest threats of our generation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? I heard a no.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to use this exchange as my first step towards warnings. If we're going to set the table, I'm going to unset it.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Finance.

On February 21, 2017, the Minister of Finance said, "We're looking at a balanced budget in this coming budget ... next year as well, and the year after that." Wrong.

"The province's books will be balanced this spring, and for the foreseeable future, insists Finance Minister Charles Sousa." Wrong.

The Minister of Finance again said, "I will confirm that we are on track to deliver balanced budgets for the next two years as well." Wrong.

This government can't be trusted.

After two years of promising a balanced budget, how does the finance minister think he has any credibility left with the people of Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have worked hard and long to slay the deficit throughout the past five years. Because of the hard work of the people of this province, we also have a surplus right here and now.

Over the last 40 years, the Conservatives have balanced the budget only three times. During their federal government, they've recorded the largest deficits in history and the largest debt accumulation anywhere in Canada's history.

We're balanced, we're in surplus, and we're going to continue to work for the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

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

I'm now going to use this round to tell us that we're in warnings. While the minister was answering, even his own side was making heckling noises that made it difficult for me to hear. Both sides need to bring it down a tone, and if you don't, I will.

Supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the minister: Again, the Minister of Finance said, "We have outperformed and as a result we're coming to balance next year and the year after that."

His fall economic statement said, "The government is continuing to project a balanced budget in 2017-18 and ongoing balance in 2018-19 and 2019-20..."

News reports announced, "Sousa confirmed last fall that Ontario's 2018 budget will be balanced—as will budgets over the next two years."

None of that was correct. This is the opposite of the truth, spread by a government willing to say anything to cling to power—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're getting very close to saying something that you know would be unparliamentary. Don't do that tiptoe for me, please. If you do, I'll ask you to withdraw the next time.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Mr. Speaker, how can the Minister of Finance tell us one thing when he knows the complete opposite to be true?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We've taken a hard stand, a disciplined and determined approach to balance the budget this year and to have a surplus now. Now we have a choice.

The Conservatives have made their choice. They have already said they are going into deficit. Further, they say that they're going to make cuts through a lot of revenue generation, including carbon pricing. They have a \$16-billion hole in their plan. What are they going to cut? What are they going to do?

We've made our choice here. We've chosen to support mental health. We've chosen to support social services. We've chosen to support students and elder care. We could choose not to do those things in these uncertain times. We choose to support them, recognizing that there's some turbulence in the market. We are not going to leave anybody behind.

Interjections.

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

Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the minister: Let me read more quotes.

"Finance Minister Charles Sousa announced that not only will the province's budget be balanced this year, it will continue to not slip into deficit for 2018 and 2019 as well." We know that's not accurate.

The 2017 budget read: “Not only are we presenting a balanced budget this year; we are on track for balanced budgets in 2018-19 and 2019-20.” We know that’s not accurate.

After two years of promising a balanced budget, I guess we can’t be surprised that the minister decided to support Liberal insiders instead.

Mr. Speaker, we need to know: Was it the Premier who made the Minister of Finance run an \$8-billion deficit?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we are tracking to remain fiscally responsible for the province of Ontario. The people of Ontario have—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So we are. The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound is warned.

Hon. Charles Sousa: They’ve asked us to manage government finances effectively. They’ve also asked us to help them manage their finances. We could choose not to do that. We could choose not to support mental health. We could choose not to support hospitals. We could choose not to support students and more education. We could choose not to support seniors’ care. We could choose not to do those things just to stay in balance, but we chose our values, and our values are shared by the people of Ontario. They value us to help them, and we’re not going to cut them as they—

Interjections.

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

Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question?

1050

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Minister of Health. I want to start by running through the facts. There are currently more than 32,000 seniors on the waiting list for a long-term-care bed in Ontario—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The President of the Treasury Board is warned.

Please finish.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Without increased capacity, the wait-list is expected to reach almost 50,000 in the next three years. That is no way to treat society’s most vulnerable. Ontario can and must do much better. The Liberals’ band-aid solutions simply are not enough.

Will the Liberal government commit to building 15,000 new long-term-care beds over five years and 30,000 beds over the next 10 years?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: As we’ve said so many times in this House, every Ontarian deserves to grow old with dignity in a safe, secure and compassionate environment. In fact, as I believe the members opposite have heard from our Minister of Finance, very much the theme of our budget this year will be about caring for those individuals in society who, of course, deserve the very best health care possible.

We’ve been clear since last year’s budget, and, in fact, throughout our term, that support for the long-term-care sector is very important. This is why we continue to make critical investments in this sector.

Our funding for long-term-care homes has increased by some \$348 million just since 2013. Our investment in long-term-care homes increased by \$80.5 million this year alone. I’ll continue to explain our commitments in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the minister: In northern Ontario, seniors make up the greatest percentage of the population, larger than any region in the province. In Nipissing, the North Bay Regional Health Centre has experienced overcrowding due to the lack of long-term-care beds available.

The closing of Lady Isabelle has pushed more and more patients to the North Bay Regional Health Centre, leading to the overcrowding and hallway medicine at that hospital. It is imperative the Lady Isabelle long-term-care facility is replaced—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services is warned.

Carry on.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It is imperative that Lady Isabelle is replaced by another long-term-care home in Trout Creek. No senior should have to wait five years for a nursing bed.

Why does this government believe having seniors wait five years for a long-term bed is acceptable?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Of course, through the last number of years, since we took office, we have opened over 10,000 new long-term-care beds and redeveloped 13,500 long-term-care beds. Specifically in the north, I have a very long list of homes that have been redeveloped in that time. We will continue to look at the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. Don’t give me that much choice. It’s like a candy store. That will do. You got the message: quiet.

Carry on.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: We will continue to work with our LHIN partners to establish where the need is greatest and where we need to establish more long-term-care facilities.

Just in the last few years—I’d like to draw the member’s attention to St. Joseph in Sudbury that was opened in March 2011; Extendicare in Sault Ste. Marie in April 2013; and Extendicare in Timmins, October 2013.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the minister: In my own riding in Nipissing, there’s a desperate need for more long-term-care beds. Cassellholme in North Bay is seeking redevelopment, something the government first announced in 2010. Back then, it was a \$40-million project. Today, for the exact same project, it is now a \$60-million project. While nothing has happened for almost a decade, our needs have become even greater.

A local councillor has said, "Sixteen additional beds will be applied for, which would be the most efficient use of additional space to the current building design."

Mr. Speaker, will the government support the redevelopment and additional beds for Cassellholme?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: As we've made very clear, we will be investing in 5,000 new long-term-care beds over the next four years, as well as providing 15 million more hours of nursing, personal support and therapeutic care annually for residents in long-term-care homes. There was a call for applications that closed just last Friday. We are reviewing those very closely, as we speak, and there's no doubt that announcements will be made in the near future.

But what I don't understand is that the opposition party has, in their People's Guarantee—we don't know if that's going to be their platform. But in that document, there was no money for hospitals or for long-term care.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I want to start by wishing everyone around the Legislature and women across the province a happy International Women's Day.

My question is to the Acting Premier. Joe Glowacki is a Londoner. He reached out to the MPP from London West this week because he was angry about the Premier's response to her question about Stuart Cline. Mr. Glowacki said that it was inexcusable for the Premier to deflect blame to the insurance company for Mr. Cline's heartbreaking story and refuse to take responsibility for what happened. He said that he knows that Mr. Cline's family was telling the truth, because the same thing happened to him in December.

Why won't the Premier and this Liberal government take responsibility for what has been happening to families like the Clines?

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

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Of course, we do acknowledge the tragedy that occurred in this particular case for this family. Both the Premier and I have expressed our deep condolences to the family.

We know that our health care professionals on the ground are always ready to assist in situations like this. We know that there are beds available for critical care patients in Ontario, and we are absolutely committed to ensuring that the communication between the insurance companies and our health professionals is improved and looked at very, very carefully.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: On December 1, Joe Glowacki suffered a heart attack while he was in Arizona with his wife. He was rushed to the hospital and was stabilized, and ready to be transported the very next day. But Joe's insurance company told him that there were no beds available at home. The insurance company had even lined up a cardiologist at London Health Sciences to take care of him. But Joe spent three more days in that Arizona hospi-

tal before his insurance company sent him home on a commercial flight with orders to see his doctor immediately.

Can the Acting Premier tell Joe and his wife, Beverley, why he never did get a hospital bed in Ontario?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: As we've said, there are beds available in these situations. What appears to be happening is that there's a breakdown in communication between potentially—and I'm just speculating—the many, many steps involved in situations like this. There are physicians involved in the country where the resident is travelling. There are physicians here ready to discuss the individual case. There are LHIN staff responsible for the coordination regionally. Certainly, my ministry officials are always ready to go the extra mile to ensure the highest quality of care for Ontarians.

We are going to do everything in our power to ensure that families have confidence that their loved ones returning from abroad will be able to receive the care that they need here in Ontario.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I can assure the minister that nobody has any confidence that the people who are travelling are going to get the care that they need, if they have to come home in an emergency situation. It is failing over and over and over in our province. The breakdown is not in communications; the breakdown is in our hospital system, and it's a breakdown that this Liberal government has caused because of cuts and underfunding. That's the breakdown, Speaker.

Joe Glowacki, Stuart Cline, David Ronald, Danny Marchand, Larry Dann: All of these people were told that they couldn't go home because there were no beds available when they faced a health care emergency.

Can the Acting Premier tell us right now how many more Ontarians waiting in pain will have to take time to convince somebody that the overcrowding crisis in this system is a real thing and not just a communications problem with insurance companies?

1100

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Apparently the leader of the third party didn't understand that there were beds available in these cases. We are asking questions about how this disconnect is occurring, and we will work to ensure all Ontarians benefit from our health care system, whether at home or abroad. I will be inviting members of the insurance associations to directly meet with officials from the Ministry of Health and myself.

What is clear is that there are beds available in Ontario for patients travelling from abroad. I look forward to discussing ways in which we can facilitate communication from the insurance companies to the hospitals and make sure all Ontarians are able to get home in a safe and timely manner.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is also to the Acting Premier. For the Clines, Ronalds and Glowackis, the hospital overcrowding and hallway medicine crisis means watch-

ing a loved one stuck in a foreign hospital. For other families, it means watching a loved one spend 24 hours in a chair in a busy ER in pain or a wife watching her husband suffer as his heart surgery gets rescheduled for the fourth time. For families in Kitchener–Waterloo, it means worrying that your local hospital is operating well over what experts consider a safe capacity.

Yesterday I revealed that the pediatric mental health unit at Grand River Hospital in Kitchener–Waterloo reached an astonishing 100% occupancy in November.

Why are the Premier and her Liberal government—
Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport is warned.

Finish, please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Why are the Premier and her Liberal government still refusing to admit that hospitals in Ontario are facing consistent overcrowding that is negatively affecting families?

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

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Again, we are turning to the situation where we are absolutely committed to improving the situation in hospitals. This is precisely why last fall we invested in some 1,200 additional hospital beds.

The member opposite perhaps doesn't recall that in the 2017 budget, we invested over \$500 million in funding—over half a billion dollars—in Ontario hospitals. It means that all Ontario hospitals are receiving at a minimum a 2% increase in funding this year. It's a significant new investment in hospitals. It will mean reduced wait times, better access to more procedures and an improved experience for all Ontarians at their local hospitals.

We know that this has been a difficult winter. We know we've had a very bad flu season. This has been adding to the pressures on our hospitals, but we have a plan to address this situation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: After 15 years they're trying to improve a system that they created a crisis in in the first place. That's the problem that we have in Ontario.

Let's face it: The 2017 budget fell \$300 million short of what the hospitals said they needed as a bare minimum to keep a system in crisis moving along in a very bad state.

Freedom of information documents also reveal that the mental health unit at Grand River was operating at or above 100% capacity every single month from September through December. Surgery, stroke and medicine units were over 100% in nearly every month in the same period.

The MPP for Kitchener–Waterloo says that hospital overcrowding stories are now the top issue that she's getting in her constituency office. This overcrowding crisis is real, it is not going away, and it needs to be fixed now.

When will this Premier and this Liberal government actually take some action?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Of course, that's exactly what we're doing. We've been planning not only in the hospital sector but in all the other pieces of the health care system. We've opened some 503 transitional care spaces out of hospital for up to 1,700 patients who don't require care in a hospital—those alternative-level-of-care patients.

I'd like to ensure that the member opposite knows that we certainly value the great work that's being done by our health care partners, all those front-line workers in the Waterloo region as a whole.

Specifically to Grand River Hospital, we added 14 additional beds, and through the 2017 budget, the government increased annual funding to Grand River Hospital by \$5.5 million to continue to support them in their delivery of high-quality health care.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Front-line health care workers in our province are stressed to the max. They are run off their feet. They leave work in tears because they're not able to provide the quality of care that they know they should be providing to the people of the province, and that problem sits on the foot of this government, which has been cutting back hospital budgets for years and years and years. This crisis is absolutely a result of decades of bad decisions and bad choices by this Liberal government and the Conservative government before them. It didn't happen overnight, but it has been getting worse under this particular Premier's watch.

What is it going to take for the Premier and her Liberal government to admit that this is not just a flu season surge, but rather the result of decades of cuts to health care services and hospitals that Ontario families rely on?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Mr. Speaker, to set the record straight, since 2003 we've increased our investments in health care each and every year, allowing us to treat more patients, provide better care and reduce wait times to some of the shortest in the country—actually validated by the Fraser Institute, you will recall.

In addition to our assistance to Grand River Hospital, we have, in the Waterloo region, construction of the Groves Memorial hospital well under way to expand capacity in the region, and we know that all three Waterloo hospitals are participating in the dedicated off-load nurses program. We do value both our paramedic services and the nurses in the ER, and we're doing everything we can to ensure that there's a smooth transition of patients into the hospital. So we are providing some \$16 million to municipalities to provide additional resources in this regard.

Lest we forget, what did the NDP do during their time in office? They closed 24% of acute hospital beds, closed 13%—

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

Hon. Helena Jaczek: —of mental health beds in hospital—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I stand; you sit, Minister.

New question.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: This question is for the Minister of Finance. Before the 2014 election, Premier Kathleen Wynne promised to reduce auto insurance rates by 15%. The Premier later on called the 15% reduction nothing but a “stretch goal.” Today the average auto insurance premium in Ontario is still almost 55% higher than the average of all other Canadian provinces. Can we record this as another broken election promise? Why would Ontarians ever trust what this Liberal government says?

Hon. Charles Sousa: As I believe the member opposite would know, we have just brought forward a whole slew of initiatives to try to reduce the fraud within the system which is causing the premiums to go up. And as the member knows, we put forward—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Whitby–Oshawa is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We’ve worked with David Marshall, who has brought in 35 recommendations, one of which is to provide a standard treatment plan to eliminate some of the nonsense that happens with the most common of injuries.

Another one is to provide an independent examination centre to avoid conflicts of interest, so that people are assessed effectively. The other one is a serious fraud office to go after those who are committing some of the frauds so we can go and attend to that and put some teeth within the commitment with OPP officers. The other one is FSCO, the financial services authority who are going to look at the postal code initiative to try to curb some of the activity and, of course, contingency fees in the legal community and address some of those issues so that consumers and victims are protected.

All in all, we have an expert panel that’s alleviating some of these stresses and we are working. The rates have gone down on average. We need to ensure that they remain even lower.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you to the Minister of Finance: The riding I represent comprises postal codes M1S, M1V, M1X and M1B. According to Kanetix.ca, the residents of these postal codes pay the highest auto insurance rates in Canada. Why are Scarborough–Rouge River riding residents being gouged by the Kathleen Wynne Liberals? Didn’t you get the message during the 2016 by-election?

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Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member trying to be cute with the question, but the fact of the matter is that those postal codes and those initiatives have severe impacts on the overall—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Niagara West–Glanbrook is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We’re addressing those very initiatives through the Financial Services Regulatory Authority that has a consumer office, and they’re looking at those postal codes. The member may suggest that we reduce them on one hand, but then they’re going to increase it in the northern parts of Ontario. That’s not fair as well, Mr. Speaker.

We need to get after the root causes. That’s what we are doing. We need to initiate and alleviate some of the stresses in those postal codes by implementing these programs. I hope the member opposite will agree with them so that we can foster some reduction in those rates and go after those communities and help those people who are affected in those urban locations.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Acting Premier.

Speaker, I want to welcome members from Water Wells First, who are here to fight for safe, clean drinking water for their communities.

Water is life. Without it, nothing survives. But for a long time now, families in Chatham-Kent have been dealing with black water coming from their wells, jeopardizing their lives and their livelihoods. Water on family farms that surround Samsung’s North Kent 1 wind turbine site became black and undrinkable when Samsung began construction on these turbines. That’s no coincidence.

This Liberal government says that the water is safe to drink, nothing to look at, and that these families are overreacting. Well, I’ve seen first-hand what the water looks like and there are scientists that have shown that that sediment is actually black shale, which is known to carry heavy metals like arsenic, lead and uranium.

My question is to the Acting Premier: Why does this Liberal government refuse to do a simple health hazard investigation to provide certainty for these families?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: To the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation acting as the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, I can tell you that the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change takes these matters of groundwater quality very seriously. The ministry has undertaken a review of water quality data to assure residents the water is safe, and thus far—thus far—the analysis has not shown a connection between water quality and the construction activity.

The company has informed the ministry that they are working with homeowners to provide and pay for licensed well contractors to inspect their wells and to answer any questions they may have regarding this issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: What an unbelievable answer from the acting minister, whatever he is.

These families are not just worried about the quality of the water in their wells for their own sake. Many of them operate commercial farms. They need water to keep their

livestock alive. Because scientists have shown how dangerous it is to drink, some of them are watering them with bottled water. They think it's unethical to give contaminated water to their livestock and to other families to consume.

It's unacceptable that this Liberal government is taking the word of Samsung, and it's a sad day in Ontario, where this is the quality of water that the government and the Premier—

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I urge the minister to come over and take a drink of this water. Take a drink of that, take a look at that—

Interjection: Sit down.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: —and come over and tell me that this is safe to drink—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will take his seat.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member is now warned. If such an outburst happens again, the member will be named.

Minister?

Hon. David Zimmer: The ministry had a very—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Come take a drink, Minister. Come take a drink.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Regretfully, the member is named. The member from Essex.

Mr. Natyshak was escorted from the chamber.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have always respected the members visiting here. I must remind you that no participation is allowed.

Response?

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, in the face of that diatribe, here is a fact: The Chatham-Kent medical officer of health has confirmed that the water particulates do not pose a health risk to residents. In fact—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I wish I knew who it was, but I have a suspicion it's the person hiding their face, hiding their mouth with their hands. I'm not sure.

You have a wrap-up, please.

Hon. David Zimmer: Two weeks ago, Water Wells First met with the ministry staff and they shared the results of the extensive testing. Again, the Chatham-Kent medical officer of health has confirmed that the water particulates do not pose a health risk.

Speaker, we will continue to monitor the well impacts closely during the construction and operation of the turbines.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Windsor West is warned.

New question.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, I understand that the date has been selected for the 2018 Ontario budget, and I

know there's plenty of speculation on what that budget will include.

Minister, I know that we've already made important investments for the people of Ontario, investments that are changing people's lives, like free pharmacare for everyone under 25, which has already benefited nearly one million people in just two months. We've made college and post-secondary education more accessible, and nearly 200,000 students will be leaving university and college with less debt through free tuition. We've raised the minimum wage, making workplaces fairer for hard-working people across this province.

I know that the people of Ontario are looking forward to the budget. Mr. Speaker, could the minister please tell us the date of the budget?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you to the member from Ottawa South. I wish to announce officially in this House that the Ontario budget will be delivered on Wednesday, March 28. I'll have the pleasure and the privilege of delivering my sixth budget.

This budget is about making a choice, a value choice. It's about values shared by the people of Ontario. We remain committed to what matters most to them: continuing to invest in child care, health care and mental health, care that the people of Ontario depend on, because we know that a healthier Ontario, where no one is left behind, is without doubt a stronger Ontario. We will not stop fighting for the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: Again to the Minister of Finance: As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, I am proud of the investments that we've made in things like palliative care and home care. But we do know that no matter who emerges as the new Conservative leader, they have no plan for climate change, and that leaves a \$16-billion black hole in their guarantee. They'll have to fill that hole with people's jobs and the services that they need—services like OHIP+, new hospitals and new schools, and we know that they're going to deny the minimum wage.

So I ask the minister if he remains committed to building new schools, new hospitals and public transit, and if he remains committed to investing in things like support for the most vulnerable and 100,000 new child care spaces?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. The difference between us and the party opposite isn't just one of dollars and decisions, it's about values. In the face of some uncertainty, with real economic anxiety I heard throughout my pre-budget consultations across the province, we must continue to invest in our greatest strength: That, of course, is the people of Ontario. It's these hard-working Ontarians who have created nearly 800,000 net new jobs since the recession.

Ontarians need to know what the Conservatives will cut for their \$16-billion fiscal hole. Is it \$20 billion from our new and upgraded hospitals? Will they cut the \$7-billion booster shot to health care supports? Are they going to cut the \$16 billion in infrastructure for schools?

On this side of the House, we remain committed to creating more opportunities for the people of Ontario, and we will not let the Conservatives put these cuts into programs and put Ontario at risk.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. For seven years I've been trying to get a simple answer from the government regarding the fish and wildlife special purpose account, with little or no success. This account pools together all revenues from fishing and hunting licence fees and royalties, and must be reinvested back into wildlife resource management.

Unfortunately, instead of using these funds for their intended purposes, this government continues to use this account as a personal slush fund. They spend it on dinners. They spend it on housekeeping services, psychologists, and buying, selling and renting housing.

Can the new minister explain how any of the above items that I mentioned have anything to do with wildlife conservation in Ontario?

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Hon. Nathalie Des Rosiers: I'm happy to answer this question, and I think we will have occasion this afternoon to continue to debate this issue.

I don't really understand why anyone would object to the fact that this funding has allowed us to stock almost eight million fish in a year in lakes all across Ontario; to have conservation officers to enforce our laws and ensure that there continues to be fish and that we don't over-hunt or over-fish; to invest in a great public education program, Learn to Fish—4,000 people have learned to fish effectively, safely and sustainably through that program; and to conduct research.

People need to be there to do this work. Does the member object to people being paid or having benefits? I think that's the problem. We want to ensure that we continue to deliver this program effectively. That requires people, and people should be paid and have access to benefits.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: No one is objecting to the fund. In fact, the Progressive Conservative Party created the fund. This government has corrupted the fund, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker. Through a lack of transparency, this government continues to disrespect our hunters and anglers throughout this province.

Today, when we debate my private member's bill to return transparency to the special purpose account and create a system for hunters and anglers to inquire about the expenditures, will the minister do the right thing and support my bill, ensuring all monies collected from these fees go directly to wildlife conservation and not paying for someone's steak dinner?

Hon. Nathalie Des Rosiers: I think the fund is used appropriately, and it is monitored. It has a lot of people—there's an advisory panel that does provide advice.

Indeed, I'm not the only one saying this. There's a quote from Mr. Angelo Lombardo, the executive director of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, who does support this fund. He says, "We need to remember that resource management needs people. We can't grow and stock fish without people. We can't do assessments or surveys without people. We can't do research without people."

These people, sir, need to be paid. We've been spending the entire week talking about mental health, and people having access to benefits such as mental health benefits is important.

I think we stand by this fund. It has done great things for Ontario and will continue to do so.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre des Affaires francophones.

Aujourd'hui, nous avons une centaine de jeunes qui participent au Parlement jeunesse, et ils aimeraient savoir : Lorsque vous avez donné le mandat à M^{me} Dyane Adam pour la planification d'une université de langue française, vous avez insisté que l'université devait avoir la gouvernance pour et par les francophones. Ça veut dire la gouvernance des programmes, de l'administration, des finances, de la vie étudiante, des activités académiques, et de la recherche et des installations physiques.

Est-ce que la gouvernance pour et par les francophones, c'est pour les gens de Toronto et du centre-sud-ouest ou pour tous les francophones de l'Ontario?

L'hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Merci beaucoup pour la question.

Encore une fois, j'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue à nos jeunes parlementaires ici. C'est un plaisir de vous accueillir année après année.

Écoutez, l'Université de l'Ontario français est un moment historique pour nous ici en Ontario. Nous allons avoir une université avec une gouvernance par et pour les francophones. Je suis très fière de pouvoir bonifier l'offre de services en français, ici spécialement dans le centre-sud-ouest, où année après année et rapport après rapport—et aussi la communauté ici du grand Toronto nous expliquait la nécessité, le besoin, d'avoir une offre de programmes.

Donc, c'est avec plaisir pour moi qu'on va continuer de travailler avec le comité technique.

Interjections.

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

M. Gilles Bisson: N'oublie pas l'Université de Hearst.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's called baiting. He gets the warning; you get the boot. Just thought I'd let you know that I'm aware of that game.

Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Je vous avais dit qu'on pose des questions, mais on n'a pas toujours des réponses.

L'automne dernier, vous avez finalement parlé de la demande de M. François Boileau, notre commissaire aux

services en français, pour la refonte de la Loi sur les services en français. Le commissaire a déposé son rapport LSF 2.0 en juin 2016. La Loi sur les services en français a plus de 30 ans. Le gouvernement libéral a été au pouvoir pendant 15 ans. Le rapport est sur votre bureau depuis deux ans.

À quand la refonte de la Loi sur les services en français?

L'hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Merci encore pour cette question. Écoutez, on s'est engagé—je me suis engagée, et je demeure engagée—à moderniser la loi qui est vieille de 30 ans. Écoutez, j'ai rencontré la communauté depuis les derniers 18 mois. Ce que j'entends, c'est qu'on a besoin d'offres de services de qualité en français.

Dans ma lettre de mandat, c'est très nécessaire pour moi d'avoir engagé et créé un plan d'action pour pouvoir répondre à cette offre de services en français. Ce que le commissaire aussi a déposé comme rapport spécial—et je le remercie beaucoup—c'est le fait de bonifier l'offre de services en français. Donc, on s'est pleinement engagé à un plan d'action, un plan d'action qui va permettre de soutenir et d'améliorer la lourdeur au niveau du processus de désignation.

On va aussi aller de l'avant avec un projet pilote qui va nous amener à une désignation plus efficace et plus attrayante. En bout de ligne, nous allons améliorer les services en français dans la province.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Deborah Matthews: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Today is International Women's Day, a day when we celebrate women's achievements throughout history and across nations and continue the work for a more equitable society.

Appropriately, last week we announced the unprecedented investment of \$242 million in Ontario's new Gender-Based Violence Strategy. This is tremendously exciting. It shows our government's continued commitment to ending gender-based violence in Ontario.

I've seen first-hand the extraordinary work that violence-against-women agencies like Anova, in my community of London, do every day. We know that violence-against-women agencies provide crucial services like emergency shelter, counselling, and transition and housing supports to help women and their children rebuild their lives.

Speaker, can the minister tell the House what this new Gender-Based Violence Strategy will mean for violence-against-women shelters and services across Ontario?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I want to thank the member for her tireless advocacy on this issue. She has been really important in moving this file forward. Thank you so much.

I want to thank all of the VAW agencies across the province and their staff who worked so much to support this initiative. I'm thrilled to share an announcement that we made last week, including \$150 million over three

years towards increased services and support for women and their children who have experienced domestic violence. That means 1,000 more women and children will have a safe bed when they're escaping domestic violence. It means 2,000 more women and their children will receive critical counselling services when needed, and this means more inclusive services to better respond to the needs of the LGBTQ+, indigenous, francophone, newcomer and racialized communities.

I'm so proud to be part of a government that takes—

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

Ms. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the minister for that answer. I have to tell you that I'm very proud to be part of a government that recognizes the need for strong services for women and survivors. Whether it's women in the workplace or women facing sexual assault or domestic violence, our government has worked hard to make sure that women feel safe.

The investment that the Minister of Community and Social Services outlined will most definitely be a positive step to ensure all women feel protected; however, we recognize that victim supports is only one part of the solution. We know that another part is ensuring the justice system is more responsive to the needs of survivors. We know that the justice system can be hard, if not truly intimidating. I know that I have heard clearly that the current process needs to be more survivor-centred and trauma-informed.

Can the minister please tell us about the investments we've made to help those survivors in the justice system?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Attorney General.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It's a great honour to get a question from the great Deb Matthews.

1130

Speaker, as my colleagues have mentioned, It's Never Okay and #MeToo seized on a conversation, and this conversation has grown. Survivors are coming forward and demanding change and support, and we need to answer. Within the justice system, we are doing this in two ways: by strengthening our support for survivors and those at risk, and by working to ensure that our justice system is responsive to the needs of survivors and their families. This includes a 35% increase to the overall budget for sexual assault centres, and providing free legal advice to survivors province-wide. These investments will have a massive impact on survivors all across Ontario.

Speaker, as I look across the floor to the official opposition, I see an opposition that has a plan that includes billions of dollars in cuts. I would like to tell this House that even \$1 billion in cuts at my ministry would completely scrap this new investment, which would not be acceptable.

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

M^{me} Gila Martow: C'est une question à la ministre de l'Éducation. Il y a quatre ans, le gouvernement libéral a

décidé de réduire considérablement le nombre d'élèves dans les collèges d'enseignants en Ontario en raison d'offres excédentaires d'enseignants. Les organismes de la communauté francophone ont mis en garde ce gouvernement de ne pas supprimer de postes pour la formation des enseignants francophones, car il était déjà évident pour eux que nous avions une pénurie d'enseignants francophones. Comme d'habitude, ce gouvernement a ignoré les conseils avisés de ceux qui s'y connaissent le mieux et a coupé à la fois les postes de formation des enseignants en français et en anglais.

Monsieur le Président, la ministre peut-elle expliquer pourquoi son gouvernement a ignoré les avertissements et coupé la formation d'enseignants en français?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for this important question.

I had a discussion this morning on this very issue with l'Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques. This is absolutely an issue that many in the French community are raising. I want you to know that we are working diligently and tirelessly to ensure that we're dealing with the shortage of French teachers in our province.

I also want you to know that this is not an issue that is just specific to our province. I've had conversations with Ministers of Education from other provinces who are also trying to make sure that they have the pieces in place to deal with this.

The reality is that we recognize the tremendous advantage students have when they speak more than one language, and we want to make sure that we are supporting French as a second language and the demand for FSL as much as we can.

We are doing a number of things on a number of different levels to deal with this issue, and I'm happy to speak about that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} Gila Martow: Encore une fois à la ministre : C'est la faute de ce gouvernement qu'on a ce problème exactement maintenant.

Monsieur le Président, nous avons des centaines d'enfants dans un seul conseil scolaire du sud-ouest de l'Ontario qui n'ont pas de professeur de français qualifié. En fait, j'ai rencontré des familles sud-asiatiques de la région de Brampton qui sont furieuses qu'il n'y a pas de place pour leurs enfants dans les programmes d'immersion en français.

Monsieur le Président, le gouvernement investit l'argent des contribuables dans les services en français et les collèges et universités francophones. La ministre peut-elle alors nous expliquer qui va utiliser ces services en français et assister à ces programmes en français si nous n'offrons pas aux élèves ontariens une éducation en français?

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to take this question.

I just want to point out once again that we are very aware of this challenge and we are working tirelessly to

make sure that we're taking care of this challenge and that we are meeting the demand.

The reality is that the demand for FSL is exceeding the supply of teachers, but we are taking immediate steps to boost the recruitment of new French teachers—an issue that other provinces are dealing with across the country.

Here's what we're doing. We're developing information campaigns that inform internationally educated teachers about the opportunities for teaching in Ontario. We are creating bridging programs to help newcomers adjust, and mentoring opportunities. We're streamlining evaluation of credentials for internationally educated francophone teachers. We're working to increase access to the profession and we're creating a new supply-and-demand forecasting model so we can be more responsive.

The reality is, Mr. Speaker, we are on it. We are doing a number of things. We're not complaining about the issue. We're actually having conversations and coming up with solutions and working with our partners to take care of the problem.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. For years this Liberal government has starved hospitals of the funding they need and they're still at it. Instead of funding every hospital properly, we've learned that the Premier is actually clawing money back from Kenora's hospital. At the beginning of February, Lake of the Woods District Hospital was projecting a balanced budget. Now, after clawbacks from this government, they're facing a huge deficit. Every time this government cuts hospital funding, patients are the ones to pay the price with longer wait times and even more overcrowding. That's the last thing that northwestern Ontario needs, Speaker.

Why is this government cutting funding for Kenora's hospital when every hospital in Ontario needs more investment, not less?

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

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I guess I will just repeat the type of plan that we have for Ontario's hospitals. I know that the member is aware that in the 2017 budget we invested over \$500 million in funding in Ontario hospitals. This was a major increase. This is what we've been doing each and every year.

The demographics of Ontario are precisely what we're studying very, very closely. We are looking at individual communities. Our local health integration networks are studying the needs in their particular communities, as I'm sure the member knows. These LHINs are governed by local people. We value their input. We will be looking very closely at individual needs as we move forward with our plan to improve hospital capacity.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I didn't want the minister to repeat a failed plan. I wanted her to explain why she's cutting money from the Kenora hospital. The government

just doesn't seem to get it, Speaker. Hospitals have been starved for years by the Liberals and before them by the Conservatives.

We have a dangerous overcrowding crisis. People are being treated in hallways for days on end. Instead of fixing the problem and funding our hospitals properly, we find out that the Liberals are cutting funding for this crucial hospital and making it harder for the people of northwestern Ontario to get the health care that they need.

Why won't this government stop the hospital cuts once and for all and stop cutting Kenora's hospital funding?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I only need to repeat our plan because apparently it isn't sinking in.

I have to say that we are continuing not only to invest in hospitals but in all aspects of the health care system. Quite seriously, if the leader of the third party continues to fearmonger in this way—I find it really distressing.

The NDP voted against a budget that provided an additional \$5.8 million for Health Sciences North this year alone and more than \$30 million in investments for northern hospitals. Lest we forget, the NDP also voted against our OHIP+ plan that would have seen nearly 25,000 children and youth in the Sudbury area have free access to over 4,400 eligible prescription medications.

If NDP leader Andrea Horwath is serious about investing in health care, then she should have supported the 2017 budget where we increased health care funding—

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

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Speaker, as you know, today is International Women's Day. I want to take this opportunity to wish all the women here today, all the women in my riding of Davenport and my mother, Arminda Bento, a happy International Women's Day.

Today is a day to celebrate the incredible accomplishments of women past and present. It is also a day to recognize the work we still need to do to create a fair and equal society.

My question is for the Minister of the Status of Women. We know that this last year has been remarkable for women. Women and girls across the world have come forward demanding change. The #MeToo and Time's Up movements have signalled a call to action. Can the Minister of the Status of Women tell us what the government is doing to respond to these important calls for change?

1140

Hon. Harinder Malhi: Thank you to my colleague for this very important question on this very important day.

This week, our government introduced two groundbreaking strategies:

Then Now Next: Ontario's Strategy for Women's Economic Empowerment; and It's Never Okay: On-

tario's Gender-Based Violence Strategy. These strategies build on our government's commitment to a fair and equal society for everyone, regardless of your gender, gender identity or expression.

It's Never Okay: Ontario's Gender-Based Violence Strategy, with an investment of up to \$242 million, responds to that call to action and the social change that we are in.

It's been 43 years since the United Nations officially recognized International Women's Day. We have accomplished so much in that time, but we still have far to go. This is why our government is fully committed to gender equality and to improving economic achievements of women. That is why we're building a fairer and more equal Ontario that includes historic new investments for women and girls in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you to the minister. It is clear that the future is changing for generations of women and girls in Ontario. I am pleased to see our government building on our commitment to create a province free from domestic and sexual violence.

Gender-based violence can happen to anyone, but women and children are most at risk. The risk is even greater for women who are racialized, indigenous, newcomers, LGBTQ2 or living with disabilities. We know that women often face other barriers that get in the way of their opportunity to fully participate in our society.

The minister mentioned Then Now Next: Ontario's Strategy for Women's Economic Empowerment. Can the minister outline how this strategy will benefit women and girls in this province?

Hon. Harinder Malhi: Thank you again for the question. It is time for all women's economic empowerment. I say this not only because it is fair, but it is right, and because a stronger, more inclusive economy is good for everyone.

Then Now Next: Ontario's Strategy for Women's Economic Empowerment is historic because it invests in women and their future. It is historic because empowerment includes new legislation to help break down wage barriers that women face in the workplace.

Speaker, we are also taking steps to promote women's corporate leadership. We're working to ensure that women make up at least 40% of appointments to each provincial board and agency by December 2019. We are also encouraging TSX-listed issuers to set and achieve a target of 30% women on their boards.

And we are taking the lead on this. We've already taken that lead on—

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

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Ross Romano: My question is for the Deputy Premier. The steel mill in Sault Ste. Marie, Algoma, will not be able to survive a 25% tariff on steel.

Since the three US tariff recommendations were first released just a few weeks ago, I've been trying to develop relationships with friends south of the border; specifically, I developed a great relationship with Michigan state Senator Wayne Schmidt. Senator Schmidt is equally concerned about the effect that these tariffs, specifically a closure of Algoma's mill, will have on his economy in Michigan. In fact, he stated to me just this past Tuesday that if Algoma closes, Michigan will immediately be forced into a recession. I'm working with the senator and other political representatives to convince the President that the US economy needs us as much as we need them.

My question for the deputy is, will you join me in my diplomatic efforts to obtain an exclusion to the 25% tariff in order to save thousands of jobs in my community and in our province?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member from Sault Ste. Marie for the question. Of course, on this side of the House, the Premier, various ministers in our cabinet, backbenchers—everyone, collectively—have said repeatedly that we are determined as a government to do what is at our core our responsibility to the people we are proud to represent, and that is to stand up at every turn for our workers and for our businesses.

We very clearly understand that in communities like Sault Ste. Marie, Hamilton and others that if the Americans go forward with the tariffs on steel and aluminum that President Trump has referenced over the last number of days, there would be very serious ramifications. That's exactly why we have said repeatedly we've been working closely with our federal partners to make sure that Canada and Ontario can gain the exemption. My understanding is that there will be an update provided perhaps even later today.

We'll continue to press hard and push hard, and that member's community can fully understand and appreciate that our Premier and our government are standing right beside them and right with them to make sure we continue to provide support.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary, the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Thank you, Speaker. My question is also to the Deputy Premier. Hamilton's steel industry and business community are also deeply concerned after the United States pledged to impose a 25% tariff on steel.

Hamilton Chamber of Commerce president Keanin Loomis said, "This is the worst-case scenario for Hamilton." Loomis continued, saying, "Ultimately there are up to about I think 40,000 jobs or so that could be impacted in Hamilton by this announcement." That's 40,000 good, stable, well-paying jobs that are at risk because of the rise of protectionism.

This dangerous wave can be rolled back through diplomacy and negotiation so that the prosperity of Ontarians is safeguarded. My question is non-partisan: Will the government join members on this side of the House on

our mission to ensure Canada is exempt from these exorbitant tariffs?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Just because a member inserts the notion that this is not partisan into their question, it doesn't actually make all of us on this side forget where they were last week on these issues, on Bill 194, the legislation that our government introduced a number of days ago and have passed, the fairness in procurement legislation.

When members, including the member from Sault Ste. Marie and others on that side, had the opportunity to stand with us, but most importantly, not just to stand with us but to stand with the people whom they are supposed to be representing and fighting for, they missed that opportunity. They didn't just miss the opportunity; they repeatedly attacked our Premier and our government for doing what is at our core—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All sides come to order. And a reminder that some people are on warnings.

Mr. Ross Romano: A point of order, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There is no point of order. Sit down.

Finish, please.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: As I was saying, on this side of the Legislature, whether it's Bill 194, whether it's the tariffs for steel and aluminum, we will never apologize for standing up for the people, the workers and the businesses of this province. I would expect those members—

Interjections.

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

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before we do the vote, I want to do two things. First of all, I want to introduce a former member from Brampton North in the 36th and Brampton Centre in the 37th, in the west members' gallery, Mr. Joe Spina. Welcome, Joe.

Also, I do recognize that there are a few points of order. If they're not points of order, I'll sit you down real quick.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Hang on. I'm not done, because I have a sad announcement to make.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It happens; it happens.

I do want to point out to the members that we've had a very strong, hard-working set of pages, and it's their last day. We want to thank them for the work that they've done. Well done.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): They took a vote and said they're coming back next week.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I did see some people standing for points of order. The Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I just wanted to recognize, once again, Terry Armstrong, chief of police of Nishnawbe Aski Nation for Thunder Bay—thank you very much for being here—Fabian Batise, the board liaison from Nishnawbe Aski Nation, and my good friend Mike Metatawabin as well. Thank you very much for being here. It's fantastic to have you here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: In the west public gallery I have some guests from Peterborough: Sandra Condon; Jim Dufresne; Marion Burton, who is the president of the Peterborough and District Labour Council; and Heather Brooks-Hill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Sault Ste. Marie.

Mr. Ross Romano: Just to the member from Vaughan's comments: Perhaps he wasn't paying attention—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will be seated.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Even after telling the member and being poked by somebody else to do it, I'm disappointed.

DEFERRED VOTES

SAFER ONTARIO ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018

POUR PLUS DE SÉCURITÉ EN ONTARIO

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 175, An Act to implement measures with respect to policing, coroners and forensic laboratories and to enact, amend or repeal certain other statutes and revoke a regulation / Projet de loi 175, Loi mettant en oeuvre des mesures concernant les services policiers, les coroners et les laboratoires médico-légaux et édictant, modifiant ou abrogeant certaines autres lois et abrogeant un règlement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1149 to 1154.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members, please take your seats.

On March 7, 2018, Madame Lalonde moved third reading of Bill 175, An Act to implement measures with respect to policing, coroners and forensic laboratories and to enact, amend or repeal certain other statutes and revoke a regulation.

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

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMahon, Eleanor
Anderson, Granville	Fraser, John	McMeekin, Ted
Armstrong, Teresa J.	French, Jennifer K.	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Baker, Yvan	Gravelle, Michael	Moridi, Reza
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hatfield, Percy	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Bisson, Gilles	Hoggarth, Ann	Naqvi, Yasir
Bradley, James J.	Horwath, Andrea	Potts, Arthur
Chan, Michael	Hunter, Mitzie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chiarelli, Bob	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Colle, Mike	Kiwala, Sophie	Sandals, Liz
Coteau, Michael	Lalonde, Marie-France	Sattler, Peggy
Crack, Grant	Leal, Jeff	Sousa, Charles
Damerla, Dipika	MacCharles, Tracy	Tabuns, Peter
Del Duca, Steven	Malhi, Harinder	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Taylor, Monique
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	Mantha, Michael	Vanthof, John
Dhillon, Vic	Martins, Cristina	Vernile, Daiane
Dickson, Joe	Matthews, Deborah	Wong, Soo
Dong, Han	Mauro, Bill	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	McGarry, Kathryn	

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Martow, Gila	Smith, Todd
Barrett, Toby	Miller, Norm	Walker, Bill
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Nicholls, Rick	Wilson, Jim
Coe, Lorne	Oosterhoff, Sam	Yurek, Jeff
Fedeli, Victor	Romano, Ross	
Hardeman, Ernie	Scott, Laurie	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 59; the nays are 16.

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

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1157 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to report the results of my annual survey of Oxford businesses. I thank everyone who participated in the survey and shared their concerns. We recognize that businesses are facing growing challenges. In fact, this year, I received a record number of responses—double from last year.

The cost of doing business in Oxford tops the list of concerns once again. From the increasing cost of hydro and small business taxes to the rising costs due to Bill 148, Oxford businesses are feeling squeezed by the government as they try to operate with rising costs on all fronts.

Because of these increased costs, local businesses report having to reduce staff hours or, in some cases, lay off staff. Fifty-eight per cent of the respondents shared

that they were forced to raise prices and increase their hours as the owner or operator simply to make ends meet.

In response to local job losses, last year, I launched the Shop Local, Buy Local campaign. This builds on existing efforts to support small businesses and create jobs by encouraging the residents of Oxford county to shop local. I want to encourage everyone to support our local businesses whenever they can.

Again, I want to thank all of the business operators who took time to tell me about their business and share the challenges that they are facing. We recognize how hard they work, and I hope that the government hears their concerns so we can work to create a successful business climate and keep jobs in Ontario.

POLICE SERVICES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Earlier today, the government forced a vote on a bill that had a poison pill in it. New Democrats voted in favour of it because, obviously, we're in favour of police oversight. We need to make sure that police services are in such a way that people can have confidence and, of course, we agree with the First Nations component of the bill. But there are segments in that bill in regard to privatization that, quite frankly, are a step in a completely wrong direction.

We're here to say that, forming the next government, we will remove all sections of Bill 175 that have to do with privatization that have been enacted in this particular bill. We, as New Democrats, stand firmly on the side of making sure that public services are delivered by public agencies, that never should police services be contracted out to private contractors, and that policing be done by those men and women who are trained, who put their lives on the line and who are there for people when it comes to the emergencies that they face.

But, of course, as New Democrats, we understand that we need to move on the issues that allow us to be able to provide more oversight to our racialized communities when it comes to policing. Of course, we support that. When it comes to what we need to do and should have done years ago on the First Nations file when it comes to policing, it's something we can support.

But again, rest assured, we will repeal every section of Bill 175 that does anything to privatize police services in this province.

BANGLADESHI COMMUNITY

Mr. Arthur Potts: As the proud representative of many Bangladeshis and Bangladeshi Canadians, I want to take this opportunity to recognize Bangladeshi Heritage Month in the province of Ontario. This was a bill that was brought by my colleague the member from Scarborough Southwest last year, and we adopted it. This is the first month that we are able to officially celebrate it.

Ontario is home to a large and vibrant Bangladeshi community, many of whom have made significant contri-

butions to the province's scientific, cultural and political development. In my community, the Bangladeshi organizations offer programs on elder abuse prevention, social integration for new immigrants and computer skills for seniors, and Bangladeshi youth lead an initiative that reduces smoking in the community and host a two-day soccer tournament.

Bangladeshis forms a large part of the fabric of Beaches–East York, and the month of March is important for the community, with March 26 being recognized as their independence day. The day memorializes the deaths of thousands of innocents who died in the liberation war that resulted in their independence in 1971. We'll be raising the Bangladesh flag here at Queen's Park on March 26.

Shortly after independence day, on April 14, is the Bengali New Year, when a number of events and parades take place in my riding.

In recognizing Bangladeshi Heritage Month, we honour the many significant contributions of the community. Canada was one of the first countries to recognize Bangladesh after it declared independence and, from that day on, our relationship with Bangladesh has been founded upon shared values of democracy and freedom.

On their new year, Speaker, I wish you and all members a Shubho Noboborsho. Happy New Year.

EVENTS IN PARRY SOUND–MUSKOKA

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise today to remind residents of Parry Sound–Muskoka and all Ontarians of some of the great activities available in Parry Sound–Muskoka this March break.

We have alpine skiing at Hidden Valley Highlands Ski Area. As of today, Hidden Valley has 12 of their 14 runs open. Of course, Hidden Valley is also where Dara Howell, Olympic gold medalist, learned to ski.

Arrowhead Provincial Park, north of Huntsville, has cross-country ski trails, snowshoe trails and a 1.3-kilometre ice skating trail. Many of the ski trails and the skating trail are still open.

Georgian Nordic Ski Club on Highway 124, north of Parry Sound, also offers cross-country skiing, and many of their trails are still open.

If you love maple syrup, Mr. Speaker, why not go see how it is made by visiting the Muskoka Maple Trail. Visit muskokamaple.ca to learn about the more than 30 maple experiences, from sugar bush tours to pancake breakfasts.

Johnston's Cranberry Marsh, near Bala, also has a skating trail and pond hockey rinks, as well as wagon rides. Every Friday night, they offer night skating on a trail lit with tiki torches, followed by mulled wine by the campfire.

Of course, if you're a hockey fan, you shouldn't miss the Bobby Orr Hall of Fame in Parry Sound.

For those looking for more indoor activities, we have great shopping and wonderful restaurants in our communities. So remember to shop local, buy local.

I wish everyone a safe March break.

RESORT DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to talk about something that's happening in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Earlier this week, the council held another meeting where hundreds of residents came to voice their opposition to the Randwood resort development as it stands today. The residents are opposed to this because they don't want to see their historic properties compromised to make way for a six-storey building that's going to change the landscape of the Commons, and I stand with them.

Mr. Speaker, this isn't the first meeting. At the last meeting about this development, which I personally attended, 700 residents came out in opposition to the Randwood resort development plans as they stand today.

Anytime we look at development, we need to be consulting the residents. They must be listened to. When you build a community, you build a special bond between neighbours and community that requires working together, ensuring that the community that their children and grandchildren inherit is just as special a place as the one that we're living in. We have something special in Niagara-on-the-Lake, something that has required hard work and dedication. We simply cannot afford to lose that.

Too much damage has already been done. The chainsaws have already come out and we've lost far too many of our trees that are on this property. Everything here needs to be put on hold until a new plan, which includes the residents' vision for their town, is created.

We can do better, and we must do better. That's the only way we can keep Niagara-on-the-Lake beautiful and preserve it for generations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the time.

INVESTMENTS IN ETOBICOKE NORTH

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Etobicoke North: First of all, happy 40th anniversary to the Rexdale Women's Centre. And I congratulate the community on the brand-spanking-new \$15-million public library on Albion Road.

I want to let my colleagues know that almost 10,000 children have benefited in my riding from OHIP+, the new pharmacare program in which we have free medications for folks under 25 years old.

We have a \$2-billion Finch LRT light-rail transit development underway with eight stops—count 'em, Speaker, eight stops—custom designed for Etobicoke North, from Humber College, Highway 27, Westmore, Martin Grove, Albion, Stevenson, Kipling, and Islington.

We have now, as well, a \$400-million expansion—more than doubling the footprint—of Etobicoke General Hospital, part of the William Osler Health System, which will have a new emergency department, newer diagnostics, respiratory, cardiology and a whole host of other developments.

I want to let you know, Speaker, that thousands of students as well have benefited from the free two- and four-year college tuition at Humber College. They're also enjoying their new \$90-million student centre. I want to

say that this is just part of the development going on in Etobicoke North.

I also want to take a moment to congratulate the front-line health care workers in the province of Ontario, who were able to take system-wide rot and render a clean bill of health within a matter of weeks. So I want to congratulate the health care system of Ontario.

1310

MARCEL BRUNELLE

Mr. Lorne Coe: Sadly, Marcel Brunelle, the former mayor of Whitby, recently passed away. Marcel was a true community champion who served the town of Whitby as an elected official for 24 years, including nine as mayor.

Marcel was a friend, colleague and mentor to me when I joined town council in 2003. He lived large, Speaker, and always made the tough decisions, of which there were many in his tenure as mayor.

During his time, Marcel was instrumental in the development of the Landmark Cinemas entertainment complex, the renovation and expansion of the Centennial Building, the development of the McKinney recreational centre, and the creation of the award-winning Whitby Central Library, which opened in 2005.

Marcel Brunelle need not be enlarged in death beyond what he was in life: to be remembered as a good and decent man who cared deeply for the town of Whitby and its residents and who worked hard every day to improve their lives. That, Speaker, is Marcel Brunelle's well-deserved legacy.

FIRE IN STREETSVILLE

Mr. Bob Delaney: On the evening of Friday, March 2, a major fire started in a nearly completed condo building still under construction on Rutledge Road in Streetsville near Tannery Street. The fire raged all evening long and into Saturday morning before being brought under control and put out by the Mississauga Fire and Emergency Services. The new building was completely destroyed. There were, however, no lives lost and no injuries due to the fire. The seniors' residence across the street was safely evacuated, with its residents being looked after within the community during the evening and into the next day. No nearby homes were damaged by the fire.

Our first responders—Mississauga firefighters and the Peel Regional Police—managed the situation with care and with compassion. I saw Mississauga Fire Chief Tim Beckett on the scene the morning after the fire. He'd been there all night long, and he made sure everybody knew what was happening and why.

Power was restored to affected nearby homes by early afternoon the day after the fire. Most of the nearby residents evacuated had returned to their homes within 15 to 18 hours. The fire marshal continues to investigate the cause of the blaze. Many thanks to our Mississauga

firefighters and to the Peel Regional Police for their handling of the incident.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: When driving down the QEW, the iconic towers of the steel mills in Hamilton have defined that community for decades and decades. Earlier today, we heard the member from Sault Ste. Marie speak about concerns that he brought forward with regard to this government's approach to protecting our steel industry here in the province of Ontario.

We heard earlier this week as well that the type of tariffs that the United States is looking at imposing on imports of steel, including Canadian steel, will have an enormously detrimental impact on our communities, families and workers in Hamilton and in Ontario, as well as elsewhere across the province.

Hamilton's steel industry and business community are concerned with the 25% tariff on steel exported to the United States. In fact, chamber of commerce president Keanin Loomis said, "This is the worst-case scenario for Hamilton. We didn't expect this.

"Ultimately there are up to about I think 40,000 jobs or so that could be impacted in Hamilton by this announcement," said Loomis.

I stand today on behalf of the many workers and families in Niagara West–Glanbrook who depend on our steel industry for good, stable, well-paying jobs, and ask that this Liberal government take substantial action to defend and protect our steel industry here in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments and their statements.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's never too late for warnings.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HOME AIR SUPPORT INC. ACT, 2018

Mrs. Martow moved first reading of the following bill: Bill Pr81, An Act to revive Home Air Support Inc.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Laura Albanese: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

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

Minister.

Hon. Laura Albanese: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 38 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Madame Albanese moves that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), ballot item number 38 notice be waived. Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Hon. Harinder Malhi: I'm pleased to rise today as the Minister of the Status of Women in recognition of International Women's Day. This is a day in which the world stands together in support of a woman's right to live free from violence. International Women's Day is an important time to recognize the achievements and contributions of women. It is also a time to reflect on the work that still must be done.

The theme for this year's International Women's Day is "Press for Progress." This is a call to action for all of us to press forward and continue to lead change. Our government continues to press for progress. Our government is committed to ending gender violence and to improving gender equality. We want all women, and everyone who identifies as a woman, to benefit from a more fair and equal society.

Over the past few weeks, our government pressed for progress by launching two major new strategies: It's Never Okay: Ontario's Gender-Based Violence Strategy; and Then Now Next: Ontario's Strategy for Women's Economic Empowerment. These investments will have a significant impact going forward on the lives of women and girls across the province. They are a response to the voices of the many women and girls who have come forward to press for progress in Ontario and around the world this past year.

Speaker, we are in a moment. Our government has seen women marching in the streets for change. We have heard survivors of violence say #MeToo over and over again. We have travelled throughout Ontario and spoken with agencies and people with lived experience of violence. We have been so grateful for their guidance. We have heard the stories of women who continue to live in dangerous situations because they can't find safety. We know that women are waiting to receive counselling services or struggling to get through the legal system. We have been listening, and we have taken action.

We have announced It's Never Okay: Ontario's Gender-Based Violence Strategy. It's an up-to-\$242-million commitment to ending all forms of violence against anyone based on their gender, gender expression

or gender identity. As a result, there will be more services and better supports for survivors. For example, up to 1,000 more women and children will have a safe bed when escaping violence. As well, the sexual assault centre system will receive up to a 35% overall base-funding increase. This will add 90,000 hours of counselling coverage for rural and remote communities and services to male survivors. We will also provide more help for kids and families to end the cycle of violence, with more programming for children and youth in shelters. We're increasing base funding for the Family Court Support Worker Program by up to 148%, because family breakdowns are when violence is most likely to occur.

We want to change minds and challenge attitudes about violence and improve the justice system's response. As one example, Ontario is going to pilot Canada's first-ever LGBTQ+ community legal clinic. We will also build up the Partner Assault Response Program to help offenders take responsibility and break the cycle of violence. We are creating a stronger system overall so survivors and families can get the support they need and so people can live free of violence and the threat of violence in this province.

We also recognize that more needs to be done so that women can benefit equally in Ontario's economy.

1320

There are still gender biases that influence people's views about what career paths women should choose, or how their work is valued. We know that, measured by annual wages for all workers, women earn 30% less than men. And we know that women are significantly under-represented in leadership positions. A recent report says that by addressing gender inequalities in the labour market, Ontario could add about \$60 billion to the province's GDP within a decade.

It's time to close the gender wage gap, particularly where it is the greatest: for indigenous, newcomer and racialized women, and those with disabilities.

It's time for women's economic empowerment, because it's fair and it means a stronger, more inclusive economy.

Just two days ago, I, along with the Minister of Labour, Kevin Flynn, and our Premier, Kathleen Wynne, announced *Then Now Next: Ontario's Strategy for Women's Economic Empowerment*. This strategy lays out a three-year plan to increase gender equity, challenge bias and eliminate barriers that women face at work, at home and in their communities. These are the same barriers that prevent women from benefiting equally in the economy. The strategy is the first of its kind in Canada.

Our government will be taking action in a number of areas. First, we'll be uncovering and closing pay gaps by tackling the gender wage gap through pay transparency. Just this week, my colleague Minister Flynn introduced historic legislation that will set the stage to require employers to disclose employee pay based on gender and other characteristics, and to improve pay transparency at

hiring, which will empower women to bargain at a fair wage. We'll also strengthen Ontario's Pay Equity Office to improve compliance.

In addition, *Then Now Next: Ontario's Strategy for Women's Economic Empowerment* will expand and strengthen women's centres. These centres provide low-barrier wraparound supports to women rebuilding their lives, including those experiencing violence, as well as immigrant and racialized women.

We are encouraging more women on boards by leveraging government buying power to encourage large firms to reach the target of 30% women on private sector boards.

We are removing barriers to indigenous women's leadership through targeted programming developed with our indigenous partners.

And we're establishing the Ontario Women's Entrepreneurship Association.

Speaker, these actions, and much more under the new strategy, will help create a province where women can succeed on any path that they choose.

Our government is positioning itself as a leader in Canada that is investing in women's futures at all economic levels. Our government, led by Ontario's first female Premier, Kathleen Wynne, is leading change. Our cabinet is now made up of 47% women.

I believe that having more women in positions of influence, not just in government but in all areas of life, is changing the future. But everyone has a role to play to ensure that women and girls have equal opportunities in Ontario. That is why I encourage everyone to support International Women's Day.

SOCIAL WORKERS

Hon. Michael Coteau: I rise today to mark Social Work Week in Ontario, when we pay tribute to the tens of thousands of social workers and social service workers who make such a huge difference in the lives of many Ontarians. This is a time for these hard-working people to celebrate their achievements and to receive well-deserved recognition for what they do in all of our communities.

I'm pleased that representatives from the Ontario Association of Social Workers are joining us here today at the Legislature, including executive director Joan MacKenzie Davies and manager of communications and public relations Jasmine Ferreira. Welcome to the Legislature.

I'm also pleased that representatives from the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers are joining us here today, including Christina Van Sickle, the college's director of professional practice; and Sarah Choudhury, their communications manager. Welcome to the Legislature.

This year's theme, Mr. Speaker, is "Social Workers on the Front Line of Real Issues." Let me repeat that one more time, because it's really important: "Social Workers

on the Front Line of Real Issues.” It highlights the challenge of working on the ground with people in need.

I just want to say, as a side note, that when I meet people and they tell me that they are social workers or that they provide some type of social work service in their organization, they’re always proud of the work they do, and they should be rightfully proud of the work they do here in Ontario. Without the commitment of our social workers, the quality of life of thousands of families across the province would suffer.

Mr. Speaker, through my work as an MPP, my work as a minister and as a school board trustee for almost eight years before becoming an MPP, I’ve seen the incredible importance of the work and the role that social workers have and play in the lives of many, many people. Our government is proud to support social workers and social service workers.

That’s why last year my ministry renewed the Social Workers and Social Service Workers Professional Development Fund, an investment of up to \$1 million over two years. The fund, which started back in 2015, helps social workers and social service workers update and upgrade their skills.

Specifically, the funding provides training where it’s needed, mostly including those who are working with indigenous populations, francophones and women experiencing violence. With access to continuing professional development, social workers and social service workers are better equipped to provide enhanced services to these vulnerable populations.

We share the goal of social workers and we share the goals of Social Work Week. That is to make our communities stronger and to give everyone in all of our ridings across Ontario the opportunity to be happy and to live productive lives.

I invite all members to join me in recognizing the significant contributions social workers and people who work in social services make every single day to make Ontario a better place to live.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It’s now time for responses.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY

Mrs. Gila Martow: Yes, it’s International Women’s Day, and we’re having statements from all three parties to commemorate this historic occasion. I just came from Arcadian Court downtown—I’m a little breathless—to see our colleague from this side of the House, the member for Nepean–Carleton, receive the Equal Voice award—it’s the EVE Award—for 2018. It went to Ontario MPP Lisa MacLeod.

Each year, Equal Voice recognizes an outstanding elected woman for her contribution in advancing women in public life. Sometimes they even give the award to a male who has done a lot to promote and support women in public life.

There was another recipient, actually. The Catalyst for Change Award 2018 went to Prime Minister Justin

Trudeau, who was there as well. I want to thank Madi Murariu—she’s the Toronto chapter chair for Equal Voice—for including me.

You know what? I just noticed on Twitter today that the former federal Conservative leader, Rona Ambrose, posted, “Don’t elevate or promote women to fill a quota—do it because women have what it takes.” That reminded me of my late mother, who I like to mention at this time of year. Her name was Miriam Sivak when she was born, but later in life, she changed “Miriam” to “Mia.” Gladstone was her married name, my maiden name.

My mother, in the late 1950s, got her CA, her chartered accountant degree, in Quebec, the only woman with 500 men. She wasn’t single; she was already married. She was pregnant writing her exams, and she had a baby while getting her CA and writing some of her other exams.

Imagine what it was like at that time for my mother, who was petite—I’m sure it’s not hard to imagine that—being eight months pregnant in a room full of men who were smoking. If she asked them to smoke less, they smoked more. We’ve come a long way, and we all remember those commercials where women were always behind the men and never at the forefront. Now we’ve completely flipped things around and we’ve got men getting awards for helping women.

We also have on this side of the House the member for Dufferin–Caledon, who is our deputy leader. We have three women running for the leadership of the Progressive Conservative Party, and today, we also have the PC WIP. The PC Women in Politics held a luncheon, and many of our colleagues are still there, I believe. I just want to mention that this year, the theme is #pressforprogress. So we’re going to press for progress and next year, let’s celebrate more progress for women in politics.

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SOCIAL WORKERS

Mr. Bill Walker: It is a pleasure to rise in the House on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus and remind the honourable members that this week we celebrate social workers in Ontario and across the country. This is our opportunity to applaud the tens of thousands of people on the front lines who rise above and beyond their job every day to ensure the most vulnerable people in our society are served and protected in their time of crisis.

I would especially like to recognize those who have been passionately and courageously speaking up about the need to step up and meet the demand as wait-lists for mental health and developmental services continue to grow, and those who continue to voice deep concern over the patchy support for sex trafficking victims in Ontario.

The developmental services sector has not seen an increase to their core operating budgets for nine years, while mental health continues to be chronically under-

funded. When combined with the burden of the structural cost imposed by the government's Bill 148, this lack of support means cuts to the front lines of community agencies and reduced access to critical services for Ontario's most vulnerable citizens.

This is not acceptable, Mr. Speaker, for we have already seen the devastating impact on victim service agencies, which continue to experience a crisis due to the cuts imposed by this government. Specifically, Victim Services Bruce Grey Perth saw a 15% cut to its budget and a 40% reduction in social service workers. These cuts translate into fewer victims getting the help they need. It means a bare-bones minimum support for victims of violent and sexual crimes and human trafficking.

Across the province, a lack of funding and frozen budgets have resulted in a cut of 375 front-line workers, 29 programs permanently shut down and thousands of program hours cut, leaving agencies at their breaking point and the sector in crisis. Again, this is simply not acceptable to us.

Social workers on the front line need the government's support so they can do their job, which is ensuring the most vulnerable people get access to the services and care they need to get through the crisis they are facing.

So I say to the government, enough with the platitudes. Do better than this. We call on you to put your words into action and deliver robust supports to social workers and the most vulnerable people they serve.

And to all of you on the front lines, we stand united in support of you and the work you do to help victims, and we owe you gratitude for your personal and professional commitments to bettering our society every day.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: On behalf of the NDP caucus, I am pleased to wish everyone here at Queen's Park and across Ontario a happy International Women's Day. We have so many milestones and accomplishments to celebrate, but we also know that we have a long road ahead.

I'm always proud to say that the NDP caucus is the only party in this Legislature that is represented by a majority of women members, led by Andrea Horwath, who has served as our leader for almost 10 years.

The labour movement is inherently tied to International Women's Day, and I would be remiss if I didn't mention the importance of that relationship. It is because of labour that we have International Women's Day. For well over 100 years, women in the workforce have continued to demand safer working conditions, fairer hours and equal pay. We also know that in Ontario and across Canada, it is women who are most affected by economic injustice. Women's wages are lower and poverty rates are higher. For women who are also newcomers to Canada who are racialized, living with a disability or identify as LGBTQ+, these injustices can be compounded.

I'm proud to say that the NDP stands with Ontario's women and will continue to champion policies to close

the gap. We will fight for pay equity, affordable child care and housing, an end to precarious work, truly universal pharmacare, and justice for women fleeing violence.

I also want to spend a moment recognizing just a few of the incredible women leaders from Windsor. I want to acknowledge Jodi Nesbitt, the president of Unifor Local 240; Christine Maclin, first vice-president, Unifor Local 195—the first-ever female vice-president for Unifor Local 195 and the first-ever woman of colour to hold that position; Nicole Simpson, women's committee, Unifor Local 195; Terry Weymouth, national skilled trades coordinator, Unifor; Lady Laforet, executive director, Welcome Centre Shelter for Women; Leigh Vachon, executive director, Victoria Manor Supportive Housing; Janice Kaffer, president and CEO of Hôtel-Dieu Grace Healthcare; Carol Derbyshire, executive director of the Hospice of Windsor and Essex County; Maya Mikhael, a young lady who has formed Maya's Friends; and Lina Chaker, who is with the Windsor Islamic Council.

I'd also like to acknowledge the women who run WEST, Windsor Women Working With Immigrant Women, and countless others. Speaker, I could go on and on.

There are incredible women doing instrumental work in Windsor, and I know the same is true across the province. Happy International Women's Day to all.

SOCIAL WORKERS

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Today it is my privilege to say a few words in honour of Social Work Week in Ontario. Social workers are integral to our communities, and their contributions and dedication continue to strengthen our society. To all of the social workers who are joining us today in the Legislature and all across Ontario, thank you for all that you do.

The theme of this year's social work week is "Social Workers on the Front Line of Real Issues," and I want to spend some time talking about how important this theme is. There are approximately 17,000 registered social workers in Ontario, with over 60% working in the health care system. We have social workers playing vital roles in family and children's services, addictions and counselling, income assistance services, suicide prevention, and much more. They are often the first point of intervention when our children, co-workers, families and neighbours need support.

But social workers need support too. Many of our communities are dealing with challenges such as the opioid emergency and increased rates of children and youth with mental health concerns, but they don't have the funding to keep up with demand. In fact, one of the issues that the Ontario Association of Social Workers has been pushing for is better access to and affordability of mental health services. We know that far too many people in this province are waiting months, if not years, to receive professional help because there is so much demand on the system. Right now, there are 12,000

children and youth on waiting lists, and more than half of them have been waiting longer than a year.

This government could be doing so much more to support the social workers that are so integral to our communities. They need to listen to organizations like the Ontario Association of Social Workers. They need to recruit and retain social workers in primary health centres and put patients first in mental health care.

On behalf of the NDP caucus, I want to again thank social workers all across Ontario for the instrumental work they do to assist and support our families, friends and neighbours in the challenges they face.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

CHILD PROTECTION

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas habitual absenteeism often results in students leaving school early and subsequently having significant gaps in both the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve future success;

“Whereas habitual absenteeism may be an early indicator that a child is experiencing difficulty in the home, including substance abuse and addiction, neglect, and/or abuse;

“Whereas there is a need to improve communication between education and child protection workers;

“Whereas it would be beneficial for child protection agencies to be empowered to investigate such habitual absenteeism when it cannot be resolved by the school system;

“Whereas when a child is subject of or receiving services through the child welfare, justice and/or education systems, intervention at the earliest opportunity puts the child at the centre and could identify dysfunction, provide help to the child and family, and promote better outcomes for children;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make chronic absenteeism and lateness from school, when it cannot be resolved by the school system, a child protection issue.”

I agree with this petition. There are 470 signatures here and more coming in. I affix my name to it and give it to page Bavan.

HUNTING AND FISHING REVENUES

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

“Whereas the government created a special-purpose account (SPA) in 1997;

“Whereas the SPA pools together all revenues from hunting and fishing licensing fees, fines and royalties. The funds in the SPA are legislated to be reinvested back

into wildlife management to improve hunting and angling across the province;

“Whereas the government is refusing to release the details of the spending of the SPA;

“Whereas a recently obtained report showed SPA expenditures from 2011-12 revealed expenditures (i.e. \$69,000 spent to purchase and sell a house and \$55,000 devoted to a psychologist) that are unrelated to wildlife management;

“Whereas in the past the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry has indicated that records for the SPA fund cannot be released as ‘they do not exist’;

“Whereas this is in direct contradiction to the Financial Administration Act that requires receipts and disbursement to be recorded for all special-purpose accounts;

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

“That in the name of accountability and transparency the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry direct the Auditor General to conduct a value-for-money audit of the SPA fund.”

I agree with this petition and sign my name to it.

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;

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“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 will sign my name to this and give it to Abby to bring up to the front.

ANTI-SMOKING INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH

Ms. Deborah Matthews: This petition is from the amazing young people at the Middlesex-London Health Unit, youth leaders in the One Life One You campaign.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas:

“—In the past 10 years in Ontario, 86% of all movies with on-screen smoking were rated for youth;

“—The tobacco industry has a long, well-documented history of promoting tobacco use on-screen;

“—A scientific report released by the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit estimated that 185,000 children in Ontario today will be recruited to smoking by exposure to on-screen smoking;

“—More than 59,000 will eventually die from tobacco-related cancers, strokes, heart disease and emphysema, incurring at least \$1.1 billion in health care costs; and whereas an adult rating (18A) for movies that promote on-screen tobacco in Ontario would save at least 30,000 lives and half a billion health care dollars;

“—The Ontario government has a stated goal to achieve the lowest smoking rates in Canada;

“—79% of Ontarians support not allowing smoking in movies rated G, PG, 14A (increased from 73% in 2011);

“—The Minister of Government and Consumer Services has the authority to amend the regulations of the Film Classification Act via cabinet;

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

“—To request the Standing Committee on Government Agencies examine the ways in which the regulations of the Film Classification Act could be amended to reduce smoking in youth-rated films released in Ontario;

“—That the committee report back on its findings to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and that the Minister of Government and Consumer Services prepare a response.”

I completely agree and have attached my signature to this petition. I ask page Olivia to take it to the table.

PROVINCIAL DEBT

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

“Whereas Ontario’s provincial government finances are a mess because of 13 years of Liberal waste, mismanagement and scandal; and

“Whereas this government is running eight consecutive budget deficits; and

“Whereas the government has racked up \$302 billion in debt, the highest debt in the country; and

“Whereas the debt servicing costs us \$11 billion in lost tax dollars every year; and

“Whereas the payments to service the debt are the third-largest expenditure and the fastest-growing expense in government, and money not spent on critical and core public services such as health care and education; and

“Whereas each \$1 billion of it equals the loss of:
 “—one year of long-term care for 17,000 seniors;
 “—one year of home care for 55,000 people;
 “—3,550 palliative care beds for one year;
 “—8,000 new affordable housing units;
 “—\$260 a month for one year for each ODSP recipient;

“—one year of free tuition for 2,000 students;

“—10,000 new school playgrounds;

“Whereas if interest rates do go up, the cost of servicing Ontario’s debt will increase higher still, taking out even more money out of key public services that the people of Ontario need;

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

“To take immediate action to stop sticking us with the tab for waste, mismanagement and scandal that’s made life harder for Ontarians.”

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

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Wayne Gates: “Repeal the Unfair Clawbacks to Auto Workers’ Emergency Leave Days!

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario auto workers have been unfairly singled out with an Employment Standards Act exemption in regulation 502/06;

“Whereas auto workers are hard-working people, who juggle strenuous physical labour in the workplace, rotating work shifts as well as six-day work weeks and 12-hour shifts, all while balancing the challenging demands of taking care of a family;

“Whereas clawbacks to auto workers’ bereavement days and personal emergency leave under the Employment Standards Act exemption in regulation 502/06 will have detrimental impacts on workers, as well as their families and their work;

“Whereas these changes to the Employment Standards Act are discriminatory against one particular sector” in the province of Ontario;

“Whereas auto workers deserve the same rights and protections as every other worker in Ontario;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately repeal the regulation to the Employment Standards Act which reduces the number of emergency leave days for auto workers.”

I agree wholeheartedly. I’ll sign my name and give it to Sully.

RESPIRE CARE

Mr. Han Dong: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from Flexible Options Network.

“Whereas we are concerned about the elimination of respite care from the core suite of services in the EarlyON Child and Family Centres, and the undue hardship this will cause for families who rely on this service;

“Whereas too many Ontarians who have children do not have access to part-time/flexible/short-term or respite care in their communities; and

“Whereas the Ontario government is ruling out the Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework so that ‘families can have access to programs better suited to their needs’;

“Whereas families in Ontario said that ‘they wanted more; more responsive hours of care that meets the demands of modern life’;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to sustain and fund respite/flexible child care under the banner of EarlyON Child and Family Centres as a viable option for families and their children.”

I support this petition and will sign it and give it to page Noor.

TOWN OF PELHAM

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Today I have a petition on behalf of the residents of Pelham. It’s signed by over 200 residents of Pelham. It says:

“A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the residents of the town of Pelham are increasingly concerned about the level of debt and taxation required to finance municipal projects; and

“Whereas the town council of the town of Pelham has undertaken a large capital project requiring substantive borrowing against future development charges; and

“Whereas the town of Pelham did by RFP process engage designers and construction managers by questionable means, and the citizens have requested a full interim forensic audit of the construction contracts; and

“Whereas the town of Pelham has acknowledged the existence of a questionable land-for-municipal-credits scheme that appears to violate the Development Charges Act; and

“Whereas the town of Pelham acknowledges that it has entered future development charge revenue as a current year (2016) accounts receivable without an appropriate front-end agreement, as per the capital charges act; and

“Whereas a town councillor resigned from town council of the town of Pelham, citing the ‘unethical and dishonest’ direction being taken by the town council of the town of Pelham; and

“Whereas the same town councillor has alleged that the town conducted an audit which revealed a significant discrepancy between the financial statements and actual bank balances; and

“Whereas the undersigned residents of the town of Pelham no longer trust the town council of the town of Pelham to sell publicly owned land and to provide accurate financial information to the residents;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, being ratepayers in the town of Pelham in the region of Niagara, do hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs to direct a provincial-

municipal forensic audit of the financial affairs and business dealings of the town of Pelham, as per section 9(1) of the Municipal Affairs Act.”

I will give this petition to page Harry, who will bring it to the table.

ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I fully agree. I’ll be signing this petition and giving it to Ricky to bring down to the desk.

CHILD PROTECTION

Mr. James J. Bradley: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas habitual absenteeism often results in students leaving school early and subsequently having significant gaps in both the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve future success;

“Whereas habitual absenteeism may be an early indicator that a child is experiencing difficulty in the home, including substance abuse and addiction, neglect, and/or abuse;

“Whereas there is a need to improve communication between education and child protection workers;

“Whereas it would be beneficial for child protection agencies to be empowered to investigate such habitual absenteeism when it cannot be resolved by the school system;

“Whereas when a child is subject of or receiving services through the child welfare, justice and/or education systems, intervention at the earliest opportunity puts the child at the centre and could identify dysfunction, provide help to the child and family, and promote better outcomes for children;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make chronic absenteeism and lateness from school, when it cannot be resolved by the school system, a child protection issue.”

I have signed this petition as I am in agreement with it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The time allocated for petitions has expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND FORESTRY SPECIAL PURPOSE ACCOUNT TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE DU COMPTE À DES FINS PARTICULIÈRES DU MINISTÈRE DES RICHESSES NATURELLES ET DES FORÊTS

Mr. Yurek moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 204, An Act to amend the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 204, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la protection du poisson et de la faune.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I appreciate the opportunity to debate my private member's business this afternoon. I want to thank all those who will be involved in the discussion.

I thought I'd bring a little bit of a background with regard to the special purpose account. The account was created back in the 1990s by the Progressive Conservatives and the member from Timmins—James Bay, who is here and who was here at that time. At that time, it was deemed that the licensing structure that had been created for hunters and anglers, the royalties from commercial fishermen and the fines that are given out for issues resulting from not following the regulations—that money would be pooled together in a special purpose account and be solely used to reinvest into the management of fish and wildlife resources, so it was resource management. Also, there was a council that was available at the

time to help make decisions, a heritage council, as to how that money was spent.

It was back in 2011, when I was elected, seven years ago, that a local group, the Aylmer District Stakeholder Committee, came with a problem, with an issue. Just to put into context this Aylmer District Stakeholder Committee—it's not just a group of people who love to hunt and fish, which it is, but it's also an organization that was created by this Liberal government back in 2003, I believe, when David Ramsay was the minister of the MNR. He had organized this stakeholder group to help them manage the resources in units 92, 93, and 91, I believe—but anyway, the southwestern Ontario area. They had great success. They actually created this system where, through a project, they were helping warn cars from going up and down our busy highways—they're not as busy as in Toronto—with warning lights for areas where the deer normally cross, so that people knew during times of the year when the light was flashing that it was time to be watching out for the deer. It's quite an effective program.

This group had great success with Donna Cansfield. They think she was one of the best MNR ministers they ever had to deal with. I thought I'd share that with you, just so you don't think that this group is not really knowing what they're doing or that they're partisan. They're far from partisan. Their heart is in fishing and wildlife management in this province.

On that committee, there are two previous managers of hunting and angling for the MNR. We have MNR biologists and local farmers and hunters in that group. It's a well-educated group.

That's why this bill has come to fruition.

I've been a member of the Legislature for seven years. I've had five different MNR ministers to deal with. I keep bringing up this question because we don't get the answers.

The issue is, this group had gone to the minister to seek some funding to do a deer study. They work with the local MNR to decide how many deer tags they're giving out each year so they can maintain the population. They wanted \$10,000 to do a study. There were told there was no money for that project. They said, “Holy smokes. How much of that SPA money was spent? Where in our region was it spent?” They said, “We don't have that detail.”

In my area, we have 4,000, 5,000, 6,000 hunters through the season. We have wild turkey and deer. They come and buy their licences and their tags.

They're saying, “Out of all that money that's generated in our area, we can't get the money back to study the resource that's generating that money.”

We continued to push the issue. The first minister said, “I'll get back to you,” and never got back to me. I get it. The other ministers—I got zero answers.

The Aylmer district stakeholders did a freedom-of-information request. The MNR told the Information and Privacy—wherever that goes through—that records don't exist for that detail of how the money was spent. They

said, “That can’t be true. There has to be something.” So they did it again. Luckily, we were able to get a little bit of information. When they received the information, I thought, “Great. There’s detail. You can see where the money was spent.” They went through it, and they gave me a copy of it. It really raised some flags. I’ll just highlight some of the issues:

- \$500,000 spent on accommodations;
- \$300,000 spent on meals;
- \$4,000 spent on media;
- purchase of home, \$53,000;
- psychologists, \$12,000;
- housekeeping services, \$15,000;
- personal household goods, \$154,000;
- meals, \$96,000;
- tuition, \$1,700;
- hospitality, \$15,000;
- cleaning service, \$29,000;
- laundry services, \$14—they even billed laundry services for \$14;
- stationery and office supplies, \$147;
- bedding and linen, \$7,660.

There has to be an explanation. So I asked the minister, “How does that relate to fish and wildlife management?” I didn’t get an answer.

Interjection: It doesn’t.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: It clearly doesn’t.

That’s what upsets the anglers and hunters of this province. They pay for their licences. They pay their fees. They are the stewards of our environment. They’re the ones who make sure that our forests are in good shape. They take care of the land that they’re on. It’s not like northern Ontario; northern Ontario is crown property that you can go hunting on. In southwestern Ontario, the people don’t realize that we don’t have a lot of crown land—very little, in fact. It’s all privately owned land. So not only are they hunting on land, but the farmers themselves have to maintain that property, with their own money and such, to keep the wildlife going. If they spill extra grain or corn during harvest season, they’re okay with that, because they know it’s going to be feeding the deer and the wild turkeys. They make sure things are kept in place. Not only are they doing that; they’re paying their fees. They expect their fees to go to support wildlife resource management. So that’s why my group said they wanted the study: because they’re the ones—the MNR—who decide how many deer tags to give out, how many deer can be harvested that year.

1400

Then, other things started happening. Hunters couldn’t get access to their tags to actually go hunting. They bought their hunting licence, then they went into the draw to get their tags, and all of a sudden they weren’t getting their tags. They can get that for maybe a year, and then they’re supposed to get rotated, but there’s something wrong with the program, and unfortunately they’re still paying in their money. They’re okay with paying that money and maybe missing having the ability to hunt that year, except when they realize that the money

they’re paying into is going for cleaning services, psychologists and steak dinners.

What else has happened? Well, the Thames River used to be open to walleye fishing in the spring. In 2008, the government shut it down, saying, “We want to do a study for two years. For two years, we’ll do a study, and then we’ll reopen it.” It’s still closed today. They haven’t done the study. Well, that’s what the SPA money is for, if you need the money to do the spending. That’s what those anglers buying their licences expected: Use the SPA money, do some research while this walleye fishing is shut down, and reopen it. It’s a great economic booster for our area.

Moose hunting: Guys in the north realize it—a lot of moose hunters in my area. This government has destroyed moose hunting in this province, and we don’t understand why. They’re collecting hunting and fishing licences for resource management, but they never manage the resource—the moose. We found out years ago that for the aerial count that they used to do for moose, they cut corners, or they didn’t do it as often or it got cancelled. They weren’t using the money for the right thing.

Then this government, two years ago, added a user fee onto the deer and hunting licences, but that didn’t go to the SPA fund. Who knows where that money went? So now we’ve got the hunters and anglers throughout this province paying more, because the fees go up all the time. Now they have a fee. Now they’re paying HST on that fee. They’re not getting the access to hunt and fish in this province, and now they have reports showing that the money is not being spent as it should be spent: on managing fish and wildlife. They’re paying more and getting less.

With regard to the heritage committee, I know the government mentioned that we already have a committee. I’ve got members in my riding who are part of that committee. They had no say. The ministry didn’t listen to anything they said. They were there just to rubber-stamp. This is why I’ve included this council in my piece of legislation: to actually have some say in the proper management of our fish and wildlife.

Two things were a shock today. I had a quick email from the OFAH that I saw. They’re worried that this fund will be cancelled if they kick up a stink. I’ve never said that. I’ve never heard the third party say that. I really haven’t even heard the government say they’d ever cancel it, so I don’t know why, if we actually question the transparency and accountability of this fund, they’d be afraid it would be cancelled, unless they’re hearing something else from the other side. I hope there haven’t been threats to the OFAH that they will lose this funding, because there’s no reason why they should ever lose this funding, considering it is licence fees.

Second of all, the response from the minister today was quite convincing to me that this government, over its 15 years, has officially downloaded the running of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry to our hunters and anglers of this province. She has said that it’s

to pay their benefits—to pay to have the staff on the ground. Well, that is not the reasoning of the SPA fund. Those staff, those COs, those biologists and all those people were there prior to the special purpose account being created. They should be there today. That money is needed to be used for projects to keep resources managed. It should not be used to maintain the ministry staff. That is wrong. We all pay taxes in this province, and the tax money in the general revenue should be paying for the staff, day in and day out. The extra funding from the SPA fund from the hunters and anglers of this province does not need to be going to actually running the ministry.

You've lost that over the years. I don't know where you went wrong, but you owe the hunters and anglers an apology. We need to add this transparency. Support my legislation. We'll know how the money is spent and where the money is spent. There will be a council of grassroots hunters and anglers telling you how to spend the money, and there will be a way for the people of this province to question the spending of this government and get the answers that they deserve, which we've been shut out of.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to start off by saying, first of all, we as New Democrats will be supporting this motion because we think that there should be transparency about how the special account fund is run so that everybody knows money comes in and where that money is going to. We think that's a good thing.

But I have to start this debate by saying that I remember in 1997 when Mike Harris decided to introduce legislation that was supposedly going to make sure that all of the dollars that we collect from the sale of licences for hunting and fishing or fines and all that stuff would be used to make sure we do restocking and that we do proper work when it comes to managing those bio-systems.

Remember how, with Mike Harris, the mantra was "Promise made, promise kept"? Well, this was promise made but not quite kept, because clearly when they drafted the legislation, they made it possible for it not to be transparent. It's interesting that a Conservative member comes by today and says, "Well, promise made, and maybe I should try to keep it 20 years later." But I'm with you. I think 20 years or two years, it's never too late. I think that transparency on these particular types of expenditures is important.

I think you touched the nail on the head, which is that anglers and hunters and utilizers of the forest are not interested in seeing bad management of the system. They want to make sure that whatever happens when it comes to harvesting, either fishing or hunting or any other activity in the bush, we do that in a responsible way, that we make sure that in the future there are fish and wildlife there for everybody to be able to benefit from, whether for ecotourism or for hunting and fishing.

The member is quite right to say that a lot of anglers and hunters and those who utilize the forests, as well as

in ecotourism, are somewhat upset that, quite frankly, these dollars aren't being used for what they are intended for. I think that's a very fair point that the member is raising: that we should, in fact, make sure that all of those dollars raised are used as they were intended.

I remember at the time this bill was brought in, in 1997, I made the point in the debate back then. As I read the legislation, I said, "Listen, this is one of these things where the government is saying all the right things but in the end the government is going to be able to utilize the money for other things." We were told, "No, no, no. You don't know." I think it was Mr. Snobelen who was the Minister of Natural Resources at the time when this was done. I'd have to go back and check, but I'm pretty sure it was him. But that we're doing it now is a good thing.

Because we're talking about MNR, I just want to put a couple of things on the record very quickly, and you kind of touched on them.

More and more, we are downloading our responsibilities within MNR. This hasn't just started with this minister; this has been going on for a while. We've been downloading more and more responsibilities onto the forestry sector, onto the mining sector, onto anglers and hunters, you name it. The MNR is a shell of what it used to be. I'm sure that if I was minister today, as the minister herself is not exactly happy with the limitation of her ministry as it tries to do what it is mandated to do by legislation—because we have the Public Lands Act, we have the sustainable forestry development act, we have all kinds of legislation that says the ministry has to do all of these things, and the ministry doesn't have the capacity to do them in many cases.

One of those places is cottage lot development. I'm going to put it in this debate because it's the only time I can actually reference it, because we're talking about this particular act. We have not developed a cottage lot on crown land in years. In fact, I think the last time they were done was when I was first elected in the early 1990s. What's happened is that government after government, because they were trying to save money, did not give the MNR the money they needed in order to do cottage lot developments. We have all across northern Ontario—as you probably have in your area, but in your cases it's mostly private land. Where we come from, if you want to build a cottage, it ain't private land; it's crown land. You cannot get a permit in order to build a cottage on crown land in northern Ontario. You can't even get a land use permit in northern Ontario, as we all know, and it's a real problem.

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One of the things that is important to me as a northerner—and I know as New Democrats we've talked about this before—is that we need to be able to make sure that we go back to a system where we do lake studies and we do the work that needs to be done to make sure that whatever we bring online for sale is sustainable to the environment, but in fact we get into the business of making sure that people are able to buy cottage lots so they can then build cottages in areas they'd like to. It helps the

local economy. Everybody from the guy who sells the Ski-Doo to the woman who sells the boat to the real estate agent to the lumber mill to the grocery store to the fishing bait shop—everybody benefits from it. I would just put that on the record.

I know that my colleagues would like to say something so I'm going to wrap it up right now.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Hon. Nathalie Des Rosiers: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to this bill. I will agree that transparency is always good. If there is something that we've learned from this experiment and this private member's bill, it's that we should celebrate more the great work that the fund has allowed to be done in Ontario. That's a little bit of what I want to talk about.

I want also to reassure people that I've asked again, and let me be very clear: 100% of the fund is given to wildlife and fisheries management. All of the funds are being dedicated. That's why this special fund exists, and that's why it continues to be done. It has been accounted for. Treasury Board has guidelines on it and it has continued to be done.

I want to talk a little bit about what it does, because I think there may have been some misunderstanding about what it does and why it is that it has continued to be helpful to the province of Ontario and to anglers and hunters throughout.

I was a little puzzled by the wording of the bill when I read it, because the bill amends section 85 of the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act to remove one clause and to remove the possibility of the fish and wildlife special purpose account to be used for the payment "for a matter related to the activities of people as they interact with or affect wildlife or fish populations, including any matter related to safety."

I don't think we should remove from the act the possibility of supporting programs for the safety of hunters, for the safety of anglers, and also one of the programs that I'll talk about—which has been a real success—which is Learn to Fish. It's a program that leads to teaching people how to fish safely and in a sustainable manner. That's an important program and it would not be here, it would not be available to people if the fund did not exist.

I'm trying to understand where the member is coming from. I assume he does not object to some of the things that have been paid for by the fund: the Learn to Fish program and the stocking of fish throughout Ontario. It's been a great priority of this fund to continue to ensure that there are fish in our lakes.

I think it is also important that we have conservation officers enforcing our laws to ensure that we don't overfish and overhunt, and that the system is fair to everyone. That has been part of the priorities as well.

It also funds public education development, and that is also a good thing, because I think that is what is helping us maintain biodiversity and ensuring that everybody is able to continue to have access to the bounty of our land:

the fish and the wildlife. It also allows—and this is important—for research and monitoring to be done.

Part of the issue is whether all programs are being funded. No, not all programs are being funded. I understand that initially the deer monitoring program was not funded because there was not enough money. But let me reassure you, research and monitoring continue to be done. It's crucial. We will not be able to manage our fisheries or our wildlife unless we continue to do good research.

I understand that the member does not really object to this, but I think he objects to the fact that people who are doing this work are employees of the government and that they have benefits; indeed, they have access to health care and they have access to the possibility of accessing a psychologist, if they need to. That's part of their benefit package. We've spent the last week talking about our commitment to health care and mental health. Surely, we're not going to say that the employees at MNRF are not entitled to have access to mental health.

I understand the concern, that we want the fund to be used to support wildlife and fisheries. It is, but the commitment of the ministry is much wider than just this fund to support wildlife and fisheries.

I want to quote the same gentleman I quoted this morning, Angelo Lombardo, the executive director of the anglers and hunters, who in August 2017 said the following: "When media reports of MNRF's misspending broke last fall, the fishing and hunting community was quick to assume that we were right in the middle of the next big government scandal. Fortunately, it quickly became clear that that was nowhere near reality and those who raised concerns about how our licence dollars are being spent were playing fast and loose with the truth."

Indeed, he is the one who continues to say that MNRF continues to do the good work that needs to be done. He's the one who mentions, "We cannot grow and stock fish without people. We can't do assessments or surveys without people." I think it's important that we recognize that the biologists of MNRF are important to continuing this work. It's conservation officers, biologists, scientists and technicians who could be paid through this.

He concludes by saying, "The unintended unfortunate consequence of the-sky-is-falling headlines that continue to surface is that it brings unwarranted negative attention to a good thing."

That's a little bit of what I want to say here, which is that this fund is a good thing. I know the member has concerns about the governance of it. I looked into this. I have another quote here from the chair of the Fish and Wildlife Heritage Commission, Kathy Reid. She complained to us. She's worried about this private member's bill, and says, "Since 2002, the Fish and Wildlife Heritage Commission has provided invaluable feedback and recommendations to the Minister of Natural Resources on a variety of hunting and fishing issues, including hunter education, youth engagement and the famous fund expenditures.

"By proposing to introduce a new stakeholder advisory group"—which actually duplicates the work that

they're doing—"the member's private member's bill fundamentally ignores and discredits the important perspective of the commission and the stakeholders that this member represents"—and I want to take the opportunity to thank them for the great work they are doing for it.

I want to reassure the member—and my time is coming up, but I want to share it with other members. The money is being spent on wildlife and fisheries. I agree, and I can guarantee you that we want to publicize this work better. Certainly if there was a miscommunication of non-access to the proper information, I would be quite happy to commit today to ensuring that the proper information on how the fund is spent will be made available to the public. It's important that they know it. Annually, it is part of the public report they're doing.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to this private member's bill, Bill 204, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry Special Purpose Account Transparency Act, introduced by my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London. I want to commend the member for his continued efforts on this issue. He has brought it up many times. He has asked questions, introduced petitions and raised this issue in debate.

Unfortunately, transparency does not seem to be high in the priorities of this government. The money in this special purpose account comes from Ontario anglers and hunters and is supposed to be spent to maintain healthy wildlife populations and to promote angling and hunting opportunities in Ontario, and that is all. It's some \$60 million each year. The annual report is supposed to show how that money is spent.

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Let's look at the annual report. It has lots of graphics, but very little detail. Only when a local group from the member's riding made a freedom-of-information request were they really able to find out what the money was spent on. As my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London has pointed out, it wasn't all spent on maintaining a healthy wildlife population. He went into some of the details of things that are pretty far removed from trying to manage fish and wildlife populations.

Part of the problem—and I think the member from Timmins–James Bay talked about that—is that the core funding of the ministry over the past number of years has been flatlined. Essentially, the MNRF has been starved the last number of years. I think they've had to look for money just to try to keep the doors open and keep things going, and it may very well be that money is coming from the special purpose account for core operations in the ministry that it really shouldn't be getting used for.

I do want to talk about a few other issues within the Ministry of Natural Resources that money could be spent on; for example, wolves and caribou. There's one thing the money could have legitimately been used for, and that would have been to remove the wolves from Michipicoten Island before they decimated the island's caribou herd. The wolves got onto the island in 2014

when the ice allowed them to cross from the mainland. Since then, the caribou population on the island went from about 450 animals to as few as 30. Just this winter, the few remaining caribou were removed from the island. It seems to me that it would have made much more sense just to take the wolves back where they came from, because now the wolves will have to find other prey on the island.

On the topic of wolves, another proposed idea right now in the ministry is the ban on hunting wolves and coyotes—the big expansion on the ban on the hunting of wolves and coyotes. We've all heard reports of coyotes in the city of Toronto, so I can't believe they are in any way under threat, but they've been included in the proposed ban. The Ontario Fur Managers Federation wrote to the ministry asking for the science behind this proposal, and suggested that in this case more research needs to be done both into the consequences of this ban and into whether the Algonquin wolf is indeed a native species or a hybrid species. I think that's rather critical. I want to quote from their submission to the ministry: "We believe that more research needs to be carried out on the evolution of hybrids and what changes the protection will have on our current ecosystem."

I'm not a biologist, but I would hope that the ministry would make their science public to answer these concerns. This government has a habit of acting without considering the unintended consequences of their actions. In this case, the unintended consequences might well be a dramatic decrease in deer population. If there are more wolves, they will need more food. That will impact the deer population, the moose population, the beaver population. Has the government considered what more wolves are going to mean to these species—and what about to the people in ridings like mine who depend on hunting deer and moose to feed their families through the winter? More wolves and coyotes are also going to mean more losses for farmers, again, because the wolves and coyotes will need more food.

If the MNRF has solid science to prove the need for this ban and studies into how such a ban would impact other species, they should share that science. Unfortunately, in my experience, this government is more likely to make decisions based on what an environmental lobby group says rather than based on science.

I did want to talk a bit about the many challenges that are happening with wildlife rehabilitation centres in the province of Ontario, but I think that will have to wait for another time.

I just want to congratulate the member on bringing this bill forward. I know it's something that's home-grown from his riding and that he has been very persistent on it. He has a dedicated group of volunteers who are really trying to do good work in the province. They want to see that \$60 million a year that comes from hunting and fishing licences go back into supporting the management of the wildlife in the province of Ontario. I think he should be commended for bringing this bill forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's with great pleasure that I stand here. I'll be supporting Bill 204, An Act to amend the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act.

I want to talk about some of the good-news stories that are happening in my area so that I can highlight them to the government. I'm pleased to see that the minister is here today, because I do want to give her a shout-out.

I do understand the points that are being brought up by the member from Timmins–James Bay and the member himself in regard to the questionable costs. Why do we have these questionable costs in regard to decisions that were made by the ministry? Because we have had some historical cutbacks within the MNR.

When I'm in the bush and walking a trail, doing some partridge hunting with my dog, Abby—a great dog, beautiful dog—my sons and I meet up with a game warden out there—he's walking—and we get into a discussion about him not having the proper ability to put enough gas into his four-wheeler in order to do the inspections that we need. That's the kind of stuff that the MNR needs to talk about and really focus on.

When I go into classrooms, and the Gore Bay Fish and Game Club—get to know them, Minister, because they're fantastic. The C.C. McLean classroom students, grades 3 and 4, have been raising chinook fish in their classrooms. I think that this year, they're going to be on their third year. They're hatching and they're fertilizing this year. This is a new part of their program, as far as what they're doing. It's amazing, how you can see these children come to life, because that's exactly what they're doing.

I'm glad our agriculture critic, the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, is here.

Like agriculture, when you grow food, you have an ownership into it. These kids have an ownership into these fish. They like to see them in their streams, and they like to go out and watch them.

Also, they do a lot of interaction with the tourism that comes in as well. “Oh, you caught my fish. You caught one of my fish.” This is connecting with these kids, because they're coming back and they're staying in their communities.

Another person I want to give a shout-out to, who has educated me quite a bit in regard to fish hatcheries, is Rolly Frappier. Rolly Frappier worked very closely with a young childhood friend of mine who is now the chief of Mattagami First Nation. They have opened up their fish hatchery. They've had to look outside of the MNR in order to do this. Why? It's because we've had some larger pressures of fishers and anglers on the lakes, on Mattagami Lake and Minisinakwa River. They've developed, and they've engaged with their schools.

It is amazing what you can do. It's a great educational tool that the MNR could be involved with as well.

I did want to say that I want to give you a shout-out, and I'm going to give you an update. By 6 o'clock tonight, I'm hoping to get a call in regard to a helicopter

that is going to be leaving the airport. They're going to be serving the Michipicoten Island to try and identify a last bull caribou in order to have it relocated over to Caribou Island. I'm hoping they'll be able to do it. They're going to be back. I'm expecting an update.

Michipicoten: The previous member brought up an excellent point, which is, why did it get to a point where we looked at an entire population of caribou being exterminated from an island? A healthy population of 450: Why did we wait so long to take action? We knew the wolves were there; we knew. These are actual caribou, the real ones. You can see these ones, Speaker. They're right there. It's a beautiful area—opportunities to learn, opportunities for tourism, everything. But we watched it and sat idly by—a complete devastation.

It's only because pressures were put on by Michipicoten First Nation and a lot of advocates who were in that area. Again, Michipicoten First Nation took the lead and also helped financially. There are other organizations that have now come on board with the relocation program in order to assist.

Why do we need other organizations to come in and assist financially? Isn't the role of the MNR to manage our resources?

I want to give a shout-out to Christian Schroeder, who lives on Michipicoten Island, who has been living with these caribou for a very long time, who is more than likely one of the experts on the issue; and also, Leo Lepiano, who is from Michipicoten First Nation, who has been working tirelessly on this along with Gord Eason, who is a retired MNR gentleman, who has been an advocate, trying to get this done.

I'm glad that we're doing something; I'm glad that we did. Not only did we relocate caribou from Michipicoten Island to Caribou Island, but we also relocated others to the Slate Islands—a healthy population that we're going to be bringing over.

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Actually, it's how we started the new population that is on Michipicoten Island now. We relocated about seven or eight. You know what? An insurance policy is what we're doing, to maybe reintroduce one day these caribou to Michipicoten Island. By the same token, on the Slate Islands, what we did is we took the steps to doing something. We relocated some caribou to that location, but we only relocated one bull—big concern. Everybody knows that there are some inbreeding problems and concerns that might happen from there.

It's been three weeks to four weeks now that we've been fighting to get that last bull moved over. At the last hour, I'm glad we're going to do it. We're taking the steps to do it now. We're putting the money—this money—as to what the MNR is supposed to do in order to relocate them, but I am concerned we might be too late. So is Michipicoten. They are out there, and I'm hoping I'm going to get a call by 6 o'clock saying, “We've relocated an extra bull. We'll be able to have a healthy population and give them the opportunity to

survive in order to thrive and reintroduce them to Michipicoten Island.”

When you look at all of this, this is what you should be focusing on, Minister. These are the types of projects that I’m going to be pushing forward on behalf of the good people of Algoma–Manitoulin.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Arthur Potts: It’s a great pleasure for me to speak on this issue, because today I wore my fly-fishing tie. No one in this House, I think, has caught as many big fish on the fly as I have.

Mr. Bill Walker: How big are they?

Mr. Arthur Potts: Oh, sometimes they’re this big.

This is an area very close to my heart: how our Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry manages our fish stocks.

I want to start by picking up on some remarks from the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka where he talked about unintended consequences. We really need to reverse this whole conversation on its head back on this private member’s bill, Bill 204.

Essentially, by taking out subclause (b), what you’re really doing is destroying the benefit packages of people who work for the ministry. You’re taking out the capacity to use the revenues raised from fishing licences, and you’re going after public sector workers, saying, “You don’t deserve the benefits that are there under the collective bargaining agreement. You don’t deserve those benefits.”

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay, you know the rules. I just want to stop the clock.

If I hear again from the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, you’ll be warned.

I’m going to return to the member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker.

We saw what they did last election. They talked about 100,000 jobs in the public sector they were going to get rid of. Now we’re already seeing the signalling of how they’re going to go after these public sector workers.

My fear of the unintended consequence is that you are going to have no employees to stock the fish that you’ve raised for stocking, because if you take away their benefit rights and you don’t have employees, then you’ve basically gutted the ministry.

We’re seeing a signal here. It’s a political signal of interfering in collective bargaining rights with the public sector workers, and I think it’s shameful. For that reason alone, I won’t be supporting this bill.

It’s tremendous, an MPP standing up for his community, for his stakeholders, the Aylmer district stakeholder group. They want to be engaged in the programs but we’re not funding them, because they want to count deer and it’s not perceived as a priority for our ministry in this region to go and count deer, because the deer stocks are healthy. So the member, quite rightly, is supporting his group, but he has also signalled that he wants to political-

ly interfere with funding decisions at the ministerial level. That in itself is just wrong. You have to take a step back on that. You do not interfere with government. You can advocate for your community, but you don’t now politically interfere with scientists who are spending scarce taxpayer dollars in order to get your way.

Speaker, you heard very clearly from the minister. I appreciate the notion of transparency. It’s a very important criterion for our government. We brought in the transparency protection act. If the MPP is not getting, in a transparent and quick way, access to estimates—and not just at the end of the year when they come forward. As MPPs, we should have the privilege, and I would support the member’s right to know exactly what’s in that public special account in order to know: Are those appropriate expenditures?

But if someone is buying a steak—and I’ve heard the member say this—and it’s part of their per diem and it’s all within the rules, then he shouldn’t be critical of that. Maybe it’s a delicious deer steak. That is part of the benefits when we allow them to work for us, and we’re very proud of the work that we’re doing.

I’m proud of the fact that Ontario Power Generation is supporting the production of Atlantic salmon and releasing them into creeks all along the north shore of Ontario, so we’re now populating Lake Ontario. I get out in boats. I catch those salmon. I get the steelheads when they’re coming up the Maitland River in Goderich.

I’m delighted that we’re doing such a great job with the conservation file.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I am pleased to rise and speak in support of my colleague’s bill. For almost five years, Jeff Yurek, my seatmate and the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London, has been dogged—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Seven.

Mr. Bill Walker: Seven years—in shining a light on the special purpose account and calling on this Liberal government to release the expenditures of this account. I commend him.

As you are aware, the special purpose account was created years ago, when the PC government of the day initiated licence fees for angling in Ontario. The idea of this account was to pool together all revenues from hunting and fishing licences and then put 100% back into wildlife management, in an effort to improve hunting and angling across the province. Sadly, the 100% has not happened, Madam Speaker, and still isn’t happening.

This account, worth over \$70 million a year, was to be spent only on resource management: projects like fish habitat restoration that we need in my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and across many Great Lakes communities and northern Ontario. Sadly, the government appears to have ransacked the special purpose account money on personal perks, allowing it to be spent on real estate fees for a homebuyer, moving expenses, rental accommodations and even paying for therapy sessions with psychologists. A report from 2011–12 shows that the

Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry spent \$69,000 of this money to buy and sell a house, and another \$55,000 on psychologists and other medical services.

As I'm sure all of you are asking by now, or should be, what does buying a home and paying almost \$14,000 in home moving expenses have to do with fish and wildlife conservation? There's a \$9,000 expense for doctors' appointments, and another \$39,604 in other medical services. There's \$165,000 for hospitality expenses, suggesting the ministry knows how to throw a big party, and \$6.5 million in non-consulting fees.

Other spending anomalies include \$172,000 for car accessories, while only \$160,000 was spent on cars themselves. I don't know how the ministry managed to spend more money on accessories than they did on the actual vehicles, but I invite the minister to show us how that looks. It's clear that none of these items are for the fund's intended purpose: to improve angling and hunting in Ontario.

The member from Beaches–East York was just talking about benefits, Madam Speaker. I think I want to allude back to my colleagues, who have said that the core funding should be there. If this government wasn't wasting so many billions of dollars, core funding like benefits would be there for all of the employees. It shouldn't be put on the backs of the anglers and hunters who want to sustain and ensure that that fishery or that hunting opportunity is there.

The downloading of core responsibilities: I know that in my riding, many of the hunters, fishers and anglers have said to me for many years, "Where are all the conservation officers"—people like Joel Tost and Billy Grieves, who were great conservation officers in the Bruce Peninsula. There are less of them today. Again, back to that core downloading: They've been doing that and putting it on their backs, and those core conservation officers are not nearly as plentiful as they used to be. They were there to truly be working with the conservation groups, anglers and hunters.

And yet when a conservation group applied for a \$10,000 grant for a wildlife project, the government told them no. There was no money left in that \$70-million-a-year fund, because the government used it for all kinds of other purposes.

Because of this wasteful and scandalous spending, my colleague is proposing that we amend the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act to restrict the purposes for which the minister may pay out money from the ministry's special purpose account. It also requires the minister to establish an advisory committee to advise on the operation of the separate account, and a procedure for receiving complaints from members of the public about decisions that the minister makes for payments made out of the separate account. In her opening statement, the minister said that she's all for transparency, so I hope she would be supporting something like that, supporting that openness, transparency and accountability.

I am very deeply troubled about the waste and mismanagement at the ministry, while hunters and anglers

are facing increased fees and while local conservation clubs continue to go without the needed funds for important local fisheries and wildlife projects. I recently met with ministry officials to voice some of these concerns and remind them of the good work being done by the sportsmen in my riding, including the Bruce Peninsula Sportsmen's Association, the Sydenham Sportsmen's Association and the Hepworth Anglers Club on Spring Creek, which runs across my cousin Paul Walker's property. I thank the minister's staff for doing that brief.

The Bruce Peninsula sportsmen, for example, have stocked more than five million rainbow trout, raise 500,000 salmonids each year, and build and maintain hundreds of eastern bluebird nesting boxes. I was just there on Family Day and walked through their clubhouse, and saw the many yearlings that they're raising. These folks—Gordie Smith and Ray Marklevitz are two of the guys I know from that club; they have put in over 40 years of their lives on a voluntary basis to do that. I can tell you that they're furious when they hear people stand up and talk about things like the expenses that have nothing to do with conservation. And then they go and try to get a little bit of money to continue that operation and continue to build the fishery and they get noes from the ministry.

1440

The Salmon Spectacular in Owen Sound is an event that was established and hosted by the Sydenham Sportsmen's Association. People like Fred Geberdt, Chris Geberdt, Jack Doherty and Arnie Clark have been there for many, many years, doing great work.

Ray Reidel and Reg Kreuger—back to the Bruce Peninsula Sportsmen's Association—and president Jim Martell: These people invest thousands and thousands of hours of time over the years in these things, and they're there for the true benefit of the actual conservation movement. They want to have fish and wildlife there for their kids and grandkids to enjoy. It's very frustrating.

My colleague I commend again, that he's actually putting this in front of people. "You want to talk transparency?" he's asking the minister. "Where are the numbers? Show me the absolute, to-the-penny accounting and justify how these are true expenditures."

Why isn't the government supporting these wildlife and conservation efforts? Why is this important conservation work being left to fundraising, while the ministry wastes money on other things that are perks that they want to stand and rationalize rather than working with us to say, "You're right. This should be a core, fundamental issue of the government."

I absolutely support Bill 204, which aims to guarantee that anglers' and hunters' fees go for their intended purpose: to improve angling and hunting in Ontario. I believe Bill 204 will stop this government from continuing to use this account as a personal slush fund or cash grab and putting it into other areas of spending. What they have done is, frankly, disrespectful to the hunters and anglers in Bruce-Grey and all across Ontario. It's

time for transparency and a guarantee that the service fees will be put back into conservation.

I want to again commend my colleague Jeff Yurek from Elgin–Middlesex–London. I hope the government will stand with him, as opposed to finding ways around this.

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

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thanks to those who spoke today. I just want to clarify a few points that were delivered.

The minister has confirmed that this government has downloaded the core funding of the MNR onto the backs of hunters and anglers. There's no reason at all why a special purpose account for wildlife and resource management needs to pay for the benefits of employees of the government of Ontario. You don't see that in the Ministry of Energy; you don't see it in the Ministry of the Environment; you don't see it in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. But with the MNRF, this government has decided to take the money from the hunters and anglers and use it for running their ministry, which is dead wrong.

The member from Beaches–East York talking about safety and trying to tie that into 100,000 jobs: That's ridiculous. You can bend anything around safety to spend money foolishly like you have on that side of the House. The fact that the government thinks it's their role to teach people how to fish is an insult to the heritage of our province, to the fact that communities together—friends, family, relatives—have spent time for hundreds and hundreds of years teaching each other our heritage.

You want to do something for the people of Ontario? Stop stealing their money. Stop wasting it, and ensure that you're placing the hunters' and anglers' fees where they should be—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I heard the term the member just used. It is not parliamentary, so you need to withdraw.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm sorry. I'll withdraw. That slipped out in my delivery—my passion.

Madam Speaker, \$75 million a year over 15 years is well over \$1 billion unaccounted for from this government. We're asking for details on how the government is spending it. If it is truly spent on hunting and fishing and wildlife management, if it's spent properly, as per the legislation, then give us the details and remove all doubt. That's all we're asking, and they refuse to do so.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

STUDENT ABSENTEEISM
AND PROTECTION ACT, 2018
LOI DE 2018 SUR L'ABSENTÉISME
ET LA PROTECTION DES ÉLÈVES

Ms. Hoggarth moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 198, An Act to amend the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017 and the Education Act to protect students who are habitually absent from or late arriving to school / *Projet de loi 198, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2017 sur les services à l'enfance, à la jeunesse et à la famille et la Loi sur l'éducation pour protéger les élèves qui s'absentent de l'école ou y arrivent en retard de façon répétée.*

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I rise in the House today to begin debate on Bill 198. You might wonder why I decided that this should be the topic of my private member's bill. As a professional educator since 1971, one of the most frustrating issues that educators such as myself face far too frequently is the habitual absenteeism and repeated tardiness of students. Bill 198, known as the Student Absenteeism and Protection Act—

Interjection.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: Though I know it's an important bill for the Liberals, we don't have a quorum.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay, I'm going to the Clerk for a quorum call.

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

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): A quorum is now called. I would return to the member from Barrie.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Habitual absenteeism, lateness or a combination of both can far too often be an early indicator that a school-aged child is suffering from abuse or neglect and may be in need of protection. Students who are habitually absent often end up failing to complete school, reducing their chances for future success. Many times these students end up in the judicial system or as a responsibility of the rest of the citizens of Ontario.

In circumstances where the school is unable to resolve habitual absenteeism, it would be beneficial to the child for the children's aid society to investigate the situation. Improving communication between education workers and child protection workers would put the best interests of the child at the forefront and increase the likelihood of better outcomes for these children and their families.

Ontario is a province with a world-class education system in which all children are equally entitled to participate. However, when a child is unable to properly access education for reasons that may be outside of their control, they are at risk of dropping out and being denied a chance at future success.

We know that when a child is the subject of receiving services through the child protection system, intervention at the earliest opportunity puts the child's welfare at the centre and could identify the dysfunction, provide help to the family and promote better outcomes for the child's future.

In preparation for this bill, I had the opportunity to consult and collaborate with fellow elementary school teachers, school board officials, youth probation workers, a victim services expert, my local police chief and a very experienced children's lawyer, who were all supportive of this bill. In fact, a petition was circulated which in less than a month was signed by over 450 members of these professions from my community alone.

Speaker, we're not talking about a few absences here and there, or ones with a valid excuse under section 21 of the Education Act, such as medical leave or for mental health reasons. We're talking about cases where a child has been absent 40, 50, 60 or even more days in a year. And yes, I have seen this first-hand many times.

Currently, the Education Act provides limited options on how to deal with cases of habitual absenteeism. Usually the first step would involve the teacher or principal contacting the family to raise the issue. But if it continues, the principal is required to report these cases to a board official, typically an attendance counsellor, if available. Attendance counsellors may arrange further meetings with the parents, but if this fails to improve attendance, they are left with only one enforcement option: Attendance counsellors can bring the parents to court, where they will face a fine of not more than \$200. This seldom happens and does nothing to rectify the underlying issue for why the student has been consistently absent.

In practice, this is far from sufficient, for several reasons. First and foremost, my experience and conversations tell me that attendance counsellors focus their efforts on grade 9 and 10 students, with a focus to keep these students from dropping out. Given that we all know early intervention is the key to resolving many of these issues, this age is far too late to make substantial change and seldom results in positive change. Secondly, the sheer hassle of going to court over a relatively small fine often leads to counsellors simply dropping the case.

1450

This is why we must make it clear that absenteeism, in its own right, is cause for concern. When school officials are unable to resolve the issue of absenteeism, this bill provides an alternate and, I believe, more effective course of action. Attendance counsellors are not social workers trained to deal with the root causes of absenteeism in many families and are not empowered to go into the home to investigate them. Children's aid workers, however, are able to do this.

This bill also creates a duty to report in the event that educators suspect that a student has been withdrawn from school for the explicit purpose of evading child protection workers. It is no secret that some parents or guardians are willing to go to great lengths to conceal their abuse. It is not uncommon for these parents to arrange for their child to change schools, school boards or even withdraw them completely to home-school them. The feeling among many school officials, who, to their credit, juggle many responsibilities, is that they are no longer in a position to intervene after a child has been removed from their supervision.

For context, Speaker, it is worth noting that this idea is not a new one. With the help of the legislative research service, I learned that the 1927 Act for the Protection of Neglected and Dependent Children recognized absenteeism as a cause to consider a child neglected. For the next 57 years, every major piece of Ontario child protection policy recognized that a "child in need of protection" included "a child who without sufficient cause is habitually absent from home or school."

It was not until the Child and Family Services Act was introduced in 1984 under the Davis government that this was removed—and I respect Premier Davis very much. Bizarrely, a review of the debates and the committee meetings could find no explanation as to why this happened. It is time to right this decades-old mistake.

However, it needs to be said that we are not only talking about extreme abuse that leads to issues of absenteeism. In my career, I encountered situations such as a mother who was going through a rough divorce and who found it very difficult to find the energy to make sure that her children got off to school in the morning, or parents who struggle to make ends meet, so they keep their children at home until the afternoon to spare them the embarrassment of not having a good lunch.

This brings me to a very important point. By no means does this bill propose that habitual absenteeism should automatically lead to a child being taken from their home. The CYFSA specifically recognizes that "the least disruptive course of action that is available and is appropriate in a particular case to help a child, including the provision of prevention services, early intervention services and community support services, should be considered."

In cases where we can provide early intervention in a culturally sensitive manner, a little extra support and planning will often be what is needed to bring about change in families' habits. I fully recognize that the majority of the time, removing a child or children from their parents' custody is not in their best interests.

That being said, in the province of Ontario, it is the law—I would repeat that; it is law—that a child over the age of six is required to attend school, and it is their parents' responsibility to get them there. This requirement is not symbolic. It is our responsibility as a government to ensure that compliance with the law is upheld so that all students get the education they deserve so that they can be successful in life and productive students in this province.

As the Minister of Children and Youth Services has said, "I believe that it is of utmost importance here in this Legislature as a government to do everything we possibly can to ensure that young people are at the heart of our decision-making.

"Many children, youth and families in this province struggle with barriers that leave them struggling to thrive, and it's our responsibility to break down those barriers to help ensure that our province's youth can succeed."

Placing an emphasis on intervention will prevent more children from reaching crisis in the first place.

Speaker, the child advocate lawyer who brought this issue to my attention and who has been a phenomenal advocate for this bill and an important resource provided the case of a 13-year-old who we will call Jay. Jay's parents were separated, and he lived primarily with his mother. His father raised issues of possible neglect by his mother, including a lack of proper food and clothing and a lack of supervision. By the time Jay was in grade 8, he was averaging 47 absences per year and was late up to 84 times.

The principal assessed that while Jay was very intelligent, there were major gaps in his education. While an attendance counsellor became involved when he entered high school, the mother failed to comply with his recommendations, and the counsellor was unable to access the home. At various points when attendance issues were raised, the mother would move or change schools. By the time CAS and the court system became involved in his situation, they had limited ability to assist Jay's family.

Jay is a textbook example of attendance issues being among the first signs of deeper problems that do not become clear until later in childhood. This is why chronic absenteeism itself must be considered a protection issue. Professionals who work with troubled children are in agreement that habitual absenteeism is a clear indicator of deeper issues. Teachers and other education workers make sure that these kids are cared for not just in the classroom. We feed them through breakfast clubs and lunch programs. We give them academic supports and support them through our school teams. If they are not at school, we can't do any of these things, and that is when neglect can happen.

It is important to recognize that addressing habitual absenteeism is not only good for the student, as they get the necessary help that they need, but it is good for their classmates and educators alike. When a student falls behind considerably, it becomes incredibly difficult for the teacher to bring them up to date on material that they need to know, and it takes away from the educator's time for his fellow classmates.

To conclude, I would like to emphasize that this bill does not enact any broad, new, sweeping powers, but rather solidifies existing laws to provide schools with the necessary authority to act as a last resort for assisting a child in need. In my opinion and those with whom I have consulted, a child who is held back from receiving education for reasons outside of their control is a victim of neglect and needs help to end this abuse. There is no greater tragedy than the loss of a child's potential. It is our duty to help these children and to ensure that every child in Ontario has the opportunity to achieve their dreams.

Thank you, Speaker. I look forward to debate on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 198, the Student Absenteeism and Protection Act, and I do so in my capacity as the education critic for the offi-

cial opposition. I'll be sharing my time with the member from Thornhill.

Speaker, I'm sure that you would agree that ensuring the safety of children, one of the most vulnerable sectors of our community, is everyone's responsibility. Within that context, I would like to acknowledge the member from Barrie's advocacy on education, students and education workers. The member from Barrie recognizes, like the members of the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus, the importance of protecting youth and children in Ontario's education sector who are, or may be, at risk.

However, as I review the measures in Bill 198, I look at it in the context also of section 72 of the Child and Family Services Act. School principals, teachers, early childhood educators and other designates are already bound by sections 72(1) and 72(2), which pertain to "Duty to report" and "Ongoing duty to report." Within those provisions, it's everyone's duty to notify the local children's aid society if you have even the slightest suspicion a child is being neglected or abused.

It's also important to mention that the duty to report—again, within those provisions—is ongoing. Even if you know a report has been made regarding a child, you must make a further report to the children's aid society if there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is, or may be, in need of protection.

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As proposed, Bill 198 allows designated education workers to contact the children's aid society to investigate situations where a student is late or absent from school for a total of 40 days during a given school year.

The current practice, as the member for Barrie properly pointed out, in all school boards is that the attendance counsellor, in consultation and collaboration—these are important distinctions—with the school principal, assesses the need to involve child protection services in cases of absenteeism and lateness. It's unclear to me why the current approach, as I just stated, requires the level of intervention as laid out within the proposed legislation.

While I appreciate the intent of Bill 198, there are some additional concerns that are supplementary to those that I've just cited.

One is the proposed provision in Bill 198 that requires school principals, attendance counsellors or other designates to arrange a meeting with the parents of a child who reaches the 40-day absentee or lateness threshold before alerting a children's aid society. As written, Bill 198 does not provide a description or definition regarding what constitutes an attempted meeting with the parents of a child. Without that level of clarity, an attempted meeting could be limited to a single phone call before a principal or counsellor could potentially involve the children's aid society. This lack of clarity, in my view, does not give parents sufficient ability to address and resolve their child's absenteeism or truancy.

What's clear in this discussion is that there's a crucial and necessary trust relationship between home and school that this proposed bill would potentially affect if the school is seen as an agent of protective services, both

by the immediate family and, potentially, the extended family.

Lastly, as proposed, Bill 198 allows the Minister of Education to make regulations which, as of today, are not clearly laid out in the bill before us, beyond requiring school boards to notify a principal when a child's absenteeism or truancy reaches the 40-day threshold for action.

Second, the proposed bill, in my view, oversteps the judgment of education workers, who are best positioned to determine when to contact the children's aid society, should they feel that a child is in need of protection.

Education workers, like my daughter, are great at what they do—no doubt about that. These workers know the children they're responsible for best, and are often able to determine well before a 40-day absence or lateness threshold whether a student may be in need of protection.

As the official opposition critic for education and post-secondary education—and not unlike the member from Barrie—I've engaged with several stakeholder groups, associations and federations on this bill. A common thread through those ongoing consultations is the need to respect the judgment of teachers and administrators in the school.

In closing, a good education is one of the most important tools we can give our children. The best way to do this is to ensure that our children attend school in a safe and positive learning environment.

I believe that the intent and purpose of Bill 198 is already set out specifically within the legislative framework of section 72 of the Child and Family Services Act as well as in current practices in place in Ontario school boards.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will share my time with the member from Thornhill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you for allowing me to rise and speak to Bill 198 today. I understand the reasoning behind the bill. As a father and a grandparent myself, there's absolutely nothing more important in this world to me than the safety of my children, my grandchildren and everybody's children in the province of Ontario. When I think about them, I also think about the kids that are at school with them. It's why I'm here. It's why we fight for dignity in the workplace and for our environment—so they have a good world to live in when I am, unfortunately, gone.

I do have some concerns around the bill. For those that don't know, my daughter Chantel is a teacher in the Catholic school board. She teaches grades 5 and 6 in a very tough school, a very challenged school—a school where kids sometimes don't come to school. My other daughter also works in the Catholic school board with special-needs kids. Sometimes it's a real challenge getting kids to school—and their parents. My wife was a principal and a teacher for over 30 years. So I've had lots of discussion in my household around education and the value of a good education.

I can tell you, going back a bit, before I get on to the bill, when I was just a little guy, it was a teacher that saw something in me. She didn't report me to the children's aid society. She took me under her wing and brought me an apple once in a while and brought me a sandwich once in a while. She used to drive me, when teachers used to do this—they don't do it as much now because of some concerns with it—to my wrestling or hockey matches. That teacher saw something in me. That's what should happen in our schools, and continues to happen every day with the breakfast clubs, which my colleague talked about.

This bill might have good intentions, but I have some serious concerns around the consequences. It talks about flagging kids who are going to be late for school, or flagging that they could be experiencing abuse. The issue here is, think of a situation where kids are late for school. It happens in families where there are single parents, either moms or dads, in the changing makeup of our families today. It's not because they're bad parents or because they're abusive, but because there's a lot of difficulties that come from just being a single parent. It's not hard to imagine, if you're a single parent and you're sick or your child is sick or your child has lost something—there's a lot of reasons why they could be coming late to school.

This becomes even worse if you're a single parent that is struggling to find employment and taking a job wherever you can. Madam Speaker, I know this House hears me talk about good jobs a lot, but there is a distinction that needs to be made. We need to move people away from precarious work and into full-time, stable jobs, because those jobs have stable schedules and proper benefits and wages. Those are the kinds of jobs that people can raise a family on. But when a single mom or single dad is balancing two or three jobs, of course there's going to be days where they fall behind the clock. I think we can all agree to that. It's not because you're abusive, but it may end up punishing them and that's something that worries me.

Madam Speaker, think about situations where kids can't get to school on time because of transportation. Maybe they live somewhere in rural Ontario. Nobody in this House hasn't heard us raise it 100 times about the problems that we're having right here in Toronto about getting kids to school on time because of the bus situation that's going on. And it doesn't happen once; it's happening almost daily.

When I'm in my community, I can tell you, around the bus schedules, everywhere I go, bus drivers are coming up to me and saying, "We've got a problem. We can't meet our schedules." That's happening all the time. So that's another issue that I think is a real concern for me.

Madam Speaker, we've sorted out the schooling issue in Niagara before. Now, in Fort Erie, we've been successfully working together with all levels of government. We've been able to build a school there. That means that students in Fort Erie will have the opportunity to get the best education possible. There is so much more that

needs to be done to ensure that the school has the tools it needs to accommodate a growing student body and new programs, but working together, we've made strides from where we were.

1510

We have a different situation in Niagara-on-the-Lake. The school board there closed down the school in the heart of the old town. One of the reasons that residents fought against this was because of the distance the new school at Crossroads was from the people in the outlying area. That's just one small example. In the north, this becomes an even bigger issue.

What happens when rural families that are far from the school have issues with getting their kids to school on time? It happens all the time: two and three hours on a bus. It's unfortunate, absolutely, but I'm not sure we should be penalizing them for it.

Madam Speaker, I've only got 16 seconds left. I won't be able to get through all this. Make no mistake about it: The safety of our kids and our grandkids is not something that we can ever afford to neglect, but there are ways we can support and protect them that don't have a negative impact on low-income kids. One other example is mental health supports.

I'm going to give it to my colleague.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'm thrilled to stand and speak to this piece of legislation for a number of reasons. First off, I'm really thrilled to support the member from Barrie, Ann Hoggarth, who works incredibly hard. I've gotten to know Ann over the last three and a half or four years, and one of the things that I think people on this side will certainly agree to—and probably members opposite—is that this is a member who is incredibly passionate about issues around education, and also incredibly knowledgeable, as someone who has been a schoolteacher for many years. When I say passionate, I don't just mean here in the Legislature when speaking about issues related to education, but in the halls and in the caucus room. She is constantly thinking about how we make our education system better and stronger. I'm thrilled to join her in working towards doing that. This is a great example of her putting her advocacy to paper and to legislation, which can help make that system even better.

I wanted to share a brief story that I think is relevant to this piece of legislation. My family on my mother's side, as I've mentioned in the past here in the chamber, migrated from eastern Europe to Canada. Like so many immigrants who come to this country, they came because they want the next generation and their grandchildren to live a better life than they did. My grandparents were no exception.

As I was growing up, as I was in school, as I was a teenager, my grandfather would always say to me, "Yvan, I don't care what you do in life. I don't care what profession or what job you have. I really don't even care what you choose to study in school. I just want to know you're going to get good grades, and I want to know

you're going to graduate from university." For him, that was it. When I graduated from my undergraduate degree, I remember my grandfather was there, and that was one of the proudest days of his life. The same goes for my sister when she graduated; that was such a special moment for him.

For them, an education that positioned us to achieve our potential, to achieve our dreams, was the single most important thing. The reason I share that story is because I think that passion for education is something that a lot of Ontario families share, and they share that passion because they appreciate the importance of an education to their children's and grandchildren's futures.

I gave the example of post-secondary education just now, but my grandparents were just as committed and just as passionate and insisted equally that I succeed in my high school education and my elementary school education. If you want to get a university degree or a college degree or an apprenticeship, or anything after you graduate from high school, you need to successfully complete your elementary, your middle school and your high school studies.

I raise this story to highlight the fact that I think people across Ontario understand the importance of education, particularly in the labour market and the economy we find ourselves in today, and to do that, kids need to be in school. They need to be present. That's why I really was eager to speak to the member from Barrie's private member's bill.

What this is doing, to me, is underlining, first of all, an issue that's very important, which is that if there are instances where a student is absent, and in this bill it's over 40 days in a given year, then the member has proposed a series of steps that I think are reasonable to make sure that attention is given to that student by the school principal, by the counsellor, if there is one, or by other staff—teachers etc.—and to make sure steps are taken to do everything possible by the school system to help the student be present in school. In exceptional circumstances where all of those steps have failed—that involves communicating with the family, doing what can be helpful to help the student get back into school—only then does this issue get reported. I think this is a very reasonable proposal that we should be discussing and taking to committee.

One of the members opposite raised a concern about what happens if the school bus is late or doesn't show up or something like that. Again, I defer to the member from Barrie because she's more knowledgeable than I am, but, to my knowledge, that's not considered an absence on the record—

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: No; not in the least.

Mr. Yvan Baker: —so that wouldn't apply. We're not talking about absences because of late buses or traffic that parents encounter driving their kids to school or a snowstorm or something like that; we're talking about a child who misses a day of school 40 days in a year.

I can tell you, going back to my family, to my parents and my grandparents, if I missed one day, my family was

concerned. If I missed two days, my family was very concerned. If I missed three days, it was strike three: “Yvan, what’s going on here?” Forty days is a lot and requires some sort of escalation, in my view, to make sure everything possible is done for the sake of the child. This is all about the child.

I think the member has proposed something that’s very reasonable to help improve attendance at schools, to help get children and families the supports they need and ultimately help these children achieve what my grandparents wanted for me: Presence in school so that I could study and learn, so I could get good grades, so that I could pursue my dreams and achieve my potential. There’s no family in Ontario that doesn’t want that. There’s no family in Ontario that doesn’t deserve that. That’s why I’m proud to support this private member’s bill and the work that the member from Barrie has done on it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: We’re here today to speak on the member from Barrie’s Bill 198, the Student Absenteeism and Protection Act.

The member is a former teacher. I’m sure she is correct when she says that oftentimes chronic absenteeism can be a symptom or a sign of problems, but I think this bill is quite a big hammer to deal with the problem of absenteeism. We should be concerned about absenteeism, and we’re speaking about more than 40 days a year; we’re not speaking about students missing school one or two days a year. She is suggesting that the children’s aid society for the area should be called in to investigate if the school has concerns.

I know of a Brampton teacher who says that a lot of her students miss a big chunk of the winter—a month or two—to visit their family in South Asia. I guess sometimes they get dropped off by the parents and picked up, and sometimes they go with one of their parents. It’s a big concern for the teachers and a big problem for the school. It’s not exactly what you would call chronic absenteeism, and I’m wondering if maybe the member wants to address that when she has her wrap-up time.

There are a lot of parents who have challenges; they have complicated work schedules. There are children who do very competitive sports or are perhaps members of ACTRA; they get tutors. We’re quite aware of those kinds of situations, and I’m sure the member isn’t considering that to be chronic absenteeism.

I spoke this week with the Minister of Children and Youth Services at the OACAS leadership convention that they had. We all know that there’s a backlog. The social workers actually have a backlog in children’s aid societies. We certainly can’t expect them to take on more work without extra funding. Private member’s bills can’t address extra funding, can’t demand of the government extra funding, so I think that might be problematic.

Our teachers and our principals and our school administrators are professionals. I’ve said before that I was an optometrist. I certainly didn’t need a government

bureaucrat to tell me which tests had to be done or whether or not a patient should have contact lenses or be referred to a specialist. I think that sometimes if we take away the ability of professionals to do their jobs, we’re actually belittling them and making them a lower-quality professional. We’re not empowering them, which is what we should be doing.

1520

I think that it would be nice if we had a motion where the Legislative Assembly of Ontario called on our school administrators, principals, teachers, community workers and families to address the fact that we’re very concerned as a Legislature about chronic absenteeism and what it can do to hold our children and youth back from pursuing their dreams later in life.

I think we all know people who said, “I wish I worked harder in school. I wish I had parents who encouraged me more.” “It takes a village to raise a child” is the expression, but it really takes a community. I would like to see more engagement and see our schools do more after-school programs, not less. I think kids are shuffled around. Parents are stuck in traffic. Parents are working longer hours and distracted.

We have issues with bullying, and maybe that’s part of the problem of absenteeism. We need professionals in our schools who are trained in mental health and trained to understand what is going on.

There was an article very recently about a teacher in the States, who—I think it was once a month, on Fridays—would ask her students to fill out a questionnaire. One of the questions was, “Who do I want to be paired up with for the next month?” and things like that. What she would do is look at students who weren’t being requested; nobody requested to be paired up with them; nobody wanted to partner with them on any projects or sit with them. She would go and speak to that student and see what she could do to pair that student up with sympathetic other students and get them to have friends.

It was her belief—this was after the shooting in Florida—that students who don’t have friends and aren’t socializing adequately become unsocialized. That could be chronic absenteeism. It could be part “what came first, really, the chicken or the egg?” They were absent a lot, or they were absent because they weren’t socializing. She would get that kid into a social circle. She felt that maybe she was preventing the next disassociated, angry teenager who is going to pick up a gun and go into a school. We don’t know, because this is all going to be anecdotal evidence.

We heard the member from Etobicoke Centre talk about doing everything possible before we call CAS—absolutely. I think that’s what I’m trying to convey, that there are a lot of reasons why there’s chronic absenteeism. Some of them are valid, and some of them are an indication or a sign of problems, but it doesn’t mean that we should jump to call CAS. Maybe we can do more as a community. Maybe we need community organizations or non-profits that need to be called in to help first.

I think that we all have a duty to report. We all have a duty, when we have children, to be committed to raising

them. Maybe there's a problem in society now that aunts and uncles and grandparents and neighbours aren't more involved with raising our children. Perhaps it's something we as a Legislature could call on communities to get more involved in, or perhaps we're making it more difficult. Perhaps when we have legislation like this we're actually saying to people, "You don't have to get involved, because we have a law that says the CAS has to be called," so I'm really not sure.

I think we're going to hear more about this topic. It's an interesting topic. I want to thank the member for bringing it forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Just before I start speaking about the bill, I see we have three visitors in the gallery this afternoon—Christen Thomas, the executive director of the Literary Press Group; Kirsten Gunter, director of communications at the Ontario Arts Council; and Shoshana Wasser, communications coordinator at the Ontario Arts Council—here for the bill after this one.

Speaker, sometimes the road to Queen's Park is paved with good intentions. I say that because I know there are good intentions behind this proposed bill, Bill 198.

There is also an old adage that could apply—and I know you've heard this one, Speaker—"too many cooks spoil the broth." Some of us have a fear that this bill could unintentionally impact more so the lives of people who are from other countries or young people who have a different appreciation of time than some of the rest of us.

I have great respect for the men and women who sign up to be educators. I also have great respect for social workers, the men and women who work in Ontario's children's aid societies. They each have their plates full these days. So do the men and women working in our police services and our judicial system. Everyone is running full-tilt.

Truancy and absenteeism have been around forever, and there are hundreds of different causes. It has been my experience that parental guidance, or the lack of it, can be a factor. Some kids have to look after themselves because their parents may not be capable of doing so. That could make them late for school. Some may have to find jobs to support their families, and that employment may conflict with school hours. So what's the priority: school, helping to put food on the table, or helping to cover the rent so the family doesn't end up on the street? There are hundreds of reasons, yet this bill seems to narrow them down to parental neglect, when the real issue may be much more serious.

My constituency staff have been working with a mom back in Windsor. She has a troubled son who misses a lot of school. He has had issues with his mental health since he was eight years old. He's now 16. His mother has him on a waiting list for counselling, but as you know, Speaker, this Liberal government only sees mental health for children and youth as a discretionary service, not as a mandatory service. I can't understand why. The Liberals

have been in power the past 15 years, and they've sat on their hands while the demand for counselling for young people with mental health challenges has grown.

In the case I started describing to you, his problems started with ADHD. He had anger issues, anxiety and frustration. Eventually, he ran into problems with the law. He ended up on probation. The doctors gave him some medication, but the secret in mental health is finding the right combination of drugs, and every case is unique. So far, the drugs aren't doing what they're supposed to. He is journeying to self-harm with some cutting issues. His mom takes him to the ER and they get turned away without any real treatment. He's too unstable to go to school, yet his probation officer threatens him, saying, "Go to school or be arrested." There aren't many places to go for counselling, and the centres that offer it are inundated with clients and struggling with lengthy waiting lists.

This bill, as well intentioned as it may be, isn't necessarily the answer. This child may be a truant, but he's not out running the streets. He's not hanging out at the mall. He's not boosting cars and taking his friends for a joyride. His parents aren't ignoring him. They love him and care for him, and are frightened for his long-term future without counselling. The system is broken, and it has been broken for a long time.

The lineups of children and youth waiting to be seen by a medical professional in Ontario are horrendous. Depending on where you live, it can be worse than horrendous. According to statistics released by Children's Mental Health Ontario in their 2018 pre-budget document called Kids Can't Wait: Improving Mental Health Outcomes for Ontario's Children and Youth, the wait time for counselling fluctuates depending on your region. Kids have to wait 208 days on average in the Thunder Bay area and 354 days if they live in the Barrie region. God help those who live in and around Ottawa, because 575 days is the average over there.

I'm not making it up, Speaker. These aren't my numbers; this comes directly from Children's Mental Health Ontario and their 2018 pre-budget submission. If you have a child with mental health issues and you're waiting for counselling, you're better off in the Waterloo region, as the wait times there are 109 days, compared to 575 in Ottawa, 354 in Barrie or 208 in Thunder Bay. The Liberals have to answer for that because they see mental health for children and youth as discretionary as opposed to mandated.

I spoke in the House yesterday on this, and I'll be very quick: At Maryvale in Windsor, they haven't had a base increase in their budget in 15 years; in 15 years, not a penny's increase in their base budget. I tell you, they have so many children lined up, trying to get service, and they deal with 450 children as it is—and another 330 who come into hospitals with mental health issues that they service as well. It would take about half a million dollars to get rid of the lineups there.

I tell you, this bill, as well-intentioned as it is, is not the answer. The answer is making children and youth mental health a mandatory service and not discretionary.

1530

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to say how passionate the member from Barrie is about this issue. As you know, she was a front-line teacher for a number of years. She was there every day with children.

I sort of laugh when I hear members across who haven't had the experience that this front-line teacher has. She's pleading with you to listen, because she's not only speaking for herself; she's speaking for all these teachers who see these children that are missing not one or two days, but 40 days.

Wake up. If there are 40 days missing, there's something wrong, she is saying to you. And you're saying, "Well, section 72 of the act says this."

Forget the bureaucratic shield. Think about the kids, the teachers. Forty days: There's something wrong. If a kid isn't in school for 40 days, the present statute, which goes back to 1984, isn't working. Forty days: You've got to wake up, members, and understand that that child probably needs help; that mother may need help; that father needs help; maybe the other siblings need help.

She has the child protection worker in Barrie telling you, "Forty days," and you sit there going, "Well, I'm not going to listen to the child protection worker. I'm not going to listen to the teacher with years and years of front-line experience," or the other teachers who are saying we have to do something and that this is a very fragile situation that needs intervention. They talk to the parents; they visit the parents. They have to do more than just say, "Well, the attendance officer will take care of it," and you wash your hands of it. You can't wash your hands.

Look at what's happening. Look at what happened in Los Angeles, in Texas, where those kids were again told, "Oh, there's something wrong with you." Nobody followed up on those kids in Texas and Los Angeles. God forbid that's happening here.

Whether it's home school, or 40 days, we need society to care for these children, because sometimes the parents may be suffering from mental illness themselves. The parents may be suffering from—as the member from Barrie said—there could be a divorce taking place. The mother could have postpartum depression. You need intervention, for the sake of that child who isn't going to school.

It's not even so much that that child may be missing days of school—which is bad enough in not getting an education—but that child may be suffering. It could be abuse at home, either psychological abuse or physical abuse—you never know what's happening—or the living conditions that the child is under. What kind of home are they in?

Aren't you curious about why someone is missing 40 days? I know I would be very, very concerned, as a parent, if I knew a neighbour or someone was missing 40 days. And you're saying, "Don't do anything." Wait for how many days? Is it 60 days you want to wait for?

Eighty days? A hundred days? And then you're going to do something?

This is about passion for the safety and protection of children. Our schools are charged with that immense responsibility. Teachers and principals try their very best, day in, day out. But every day, in every school, there is some child who needs a little bit of extra help. That's what this is about.

Not all children come from stable homes—homes where they are supported sometimes by grandparents or relatives or neighbours. In some cases, children come from very vulnerable situations. You know who knows first about these vulnerable situations? It's usually the teacher, because good teachers—and thank God, we have some of the best schools and teachers. I know that in my own riding of Eglinton–Lawrence, I'm so fortunate. Whether you're in John Wanless school, in the east end of my riding, which rates number two in all of Canada as a school, or Joyce public school, in the west end, which rates as one of the best schools in music and math in Ontario—it's in a challenging area. John Wanless is in a good, up-and-coming area and Joyce is in a challenging area, and yet, they both are excellent schools. That is because the teachers really give a—can I say "damn"? No, I can't. Okay. Anyway, they really care about the kids, and they are there every day.

So all the member is saying is to make sure that when there are these outliers, we don't wash our hands and say, "The system will take care of them. The system will protect them." The member is saying, "Make this little change to involve more passionate professionals, like the child protection workers." Thank God, there are even lawyers who are saying that this has got to be done. If a lawyer is saying change the law and you over there in the opposition are saying, "No, no. Don't listen to the lawyers, don't listen to the teachers and don't listen to the child protection workers; 40 days doesn't bother me"—well, it sure bothers me.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from Barrie to wrap-up.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I would like to thank all of the members opposite for their input. I will take it into consideration, all of the points, when we're moving forward. I would like to thank all of the people that helped us draft this bill and gave us input.

I would just like to say in regard to what is an acceptable absence that, of course, we had a child that went in May and June to China to visit relatives, and that was every year. The parents made sure that they took the curriculum with them and went over it. That's an acceptable absence. Other people went for two years on a boat around the world, and they took the curriculum and they went through it. If a bus is late, a child is not marked late because a bus is late. If a bus doesn't show up, the child is not marked absent. These things do not have anything to do with my bill.

And mental health issues: I said right from the get-go—it's unfortunate that we use this as a political platform here to say we don't have enough mental health

help. These are acceptable reasons for students not to be there.

In my experience, I have to tell you that usually immigrants' children are there every single day. They appreciate education, and they are there.

Let me be clear: It is important to note that this bill is not intended to penalize good parents who may take their child out of school for the occasional hockey tournament or a family trip, but rather to ensure that frequent, unexplained absences from schools are properly reported to an authority who may be able to intervene and assist. We believe that in most cases, if discovered early enough, intervention can result in an expedient solution, and we get the student back to school as soon as possible.

If we can empower children's aid workers to intervene early, we can potentially prevent more serious—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. We will vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

POET LAUREATE OF ONTARIO ACT
(IN MEMORY OF GORD DOWNIE), 2018

LOI DE 2018

SUR LE POÈTE OFFICIEL DE L'ONTARIO
(À LA MÉMOIRE DE GORD DOWNIE)

Mr. Hatfield moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 186, An Act to establish the Poet Laureate of Ontario in memory of Gord Downie / Projet de loi 186, Loi visant à créer la charge de poète officiel de l'Ontario à la mémoire de Gord Downie.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Gord Downie was a poet, but was best known as a musician, a singer and the frontman for the Kingston-based band the Tragically Hip. He had a rare form of brain cancer, but he didn't let it slow him down. The Hip hit the road for a final cross-country tour last summer. It led to a summer of national bonding. It was almost as if we were invited in advance to Gord Downie's wake.

Canadians celebrated with Gord and his bandmates Rob Baker, Paul Langlois, Gord Sinclair and Johnny Fay. A true band of brothers, they had played together since 1984, criss-crossed the country dozens of times and together won 16 Juno Awards. They created summer soundtracks for an entire generation.

Gord Downie viewed Canada through a distinctive poetic lens, and most of the poems involved his songs, songs that fans across the country know by heart. He was ahead of his time. The band's first album had two songs about abused women seeking revenge.

The CBC aired the Hip's final concert live and nearly 12 million Canadians tuned in. Thanks to the CBC, it was seen around the world that night as well. The Globe and Mail said the concert "galvanized a nation." I watched

much of it from 35,000 feet while flying between Toronto and Calgary on my way to Yellowknife.

1540

Gord Downie died a couple of months after that concert, and here is what some media people said when he passed away.

Vinay Menon wrote in the Toronto Star: "Stolen from us at the age of 53, Downie is leaving when we need him most. Who will write the songs that cross generations and slice across geography? Who will be our poet laureate and history professor, our spirited raconteur and unflinching critic, our tour guide to the past and cultural voyager of the future?"

In Maclean's magazine, Michael Barclay wrote, "Downie is considered by a lay audience as one of Canada's greatest poets—even if he only ever published one book of poetry ... and his work is communicated primarily through a rock band."

Josh O'Kane, writing in the Globe and Mail, said, "Through songs such as Fifty Mission Cap and Ahead by a Century, Mr. Downie sung his poetry with both coos and howls, helping the band become kings of CanCon." Yes, there was a ton of Canadian content in Gord Downie's poetry.

At the suggestion of the member for Kingston and the Islands, we held a moment of silence here in the Legislature when Gord Downie died. The Premier extended her condolences to his friends, family and fans across the country, saying, "Gord lived every single day of his life with grace and resilience. His music was a quintessential part of being Canadian. I know that there are millions—literally millions—of Canadians who are in mourning today. I want to say that he will be greatly missed by all of us."

My leader, the member from Hamilton Centre, speaking on behalf of New Democrats, extended our condolences, saying, "He and his band, the Tragically Hip, were inspirational artists of Canada, and they gave us a goodbye and a long tour that I think will always live in all of our hearts."

This bill is intended to keep alive the memory of Gord Downie. It's intended to recognize his contribution to Canadian literature. It's offered in a non-partisan fashion. It's a symbolic way to pay tribute to Gord Downie.

Maclean's magazine put out a commemorative issue devoted entirely to Gord Downie, his life and legacy. In there, Michael Barclay wrote, "Poetry and pop music are not strangers, of course: just ask the committee who granted Bob Dylan the 2016 Nobel Prize for Literature."

Laurie Brown, a former host on CBC Newsworld's On the Arts, once wrote, "Gord doesn't consider himself one of the greatest poets of the nation ... but he is!"

Coke Machine Glow was the one book of poetry by Gord Downie. It was published in 2001. I will read from his poem This Empty House:

I am writing this on the back of the carbon-monoxide detector,

the last thing of ours to leave this empty house.

Our stains on the wall stay.
 Our dusty lines and puke traces,
 under where the crib used to be, stay.
 The waste of a thousand true projections,
 behind where our mirrors were, stays.
 The smudges of our children's peregrinations
 around their beds, looking for clearer,
 cooler needs in hospitable cracks,
 stay on the walls I painted
 the last time this house was empty.
 Go down the stairs, lock the windows, pull the blinds
 leave the main chandelier glowing
 and the hydro bill behind,
 slam the door.
 The knocker knocks its first knock
 for other people.

Ben Rayner is the pop music critic for the Toronto Star. He calls Gord Downie "a vivid abstract poet." Gord Downie has been referred to as "a notebook-filling lyricist," always jotting down phrases and combinations of thoughts and words. I have to think that, when he was writing *Coke Machine Glow*, he went back to those lyrics and those notebooks. Here is his poem *Snowy Lambeau*:

Words keep like canned peaches
 If they're good enough.

For instance "Snowy Lambeau"
 that'll keep,
 and "tomber la neige"
 (slowly falling snow)
 that too,
 and "tigers on the moon,"
 uh-huh.
 So.

Snowy Lambeau
 tomber la neige
 tigers on the moon

after all these years.

The role of poet laureate would include writing poetry occasionally for youth in the Legislature, if called upon by the Speaker or the Lieutenant Governor. The role also includes visiting schools, presenting or arranging poetry readings, and assisting with writing workshops or other activities. Younger generations would learn to appreciate language and the creative way that words can stir our emotions and stimulate our imaginations.

The poet laureate would also advise the legislative library regarding its collections and acquisitions of books of poetry.

I believe it's fitting we create the position of Ontario Poet Laureate in Gord Downie's memory. Canada has a poet laureate, as does Toronto, Windsor, Brantford, London, Mississauga, Sudbury and other Ontario municipalities. Prince Edward Island has one, as does Saskatch-

ewan. This isn't the first time that the position of Ontario Poet Laureate has been suggested in this House. My friend the member from York Centre, Mr. Kwinter, and I have suggested this previously. The difference, on this occasion, is the timing of the bill.

Canada was energized during the Tragically Hip's final tour. As individuals we paid more attention to Gord Downie's words and his poems and the Hip's award-winning songs because we knew he didn't have much time left on this earth. We came to appreciate the value that poetry brings to our culture, our history, our stories. Poetry, for some, had been a forgotten pleasure.

There are many photographs of Gord Downie; in many of them he is wearing a blue jean jacket with a yellow button on his right chest. It says, "Open Books, Open Minds, Open Hearts." An Ontario Poet Laureate would do just that. He or she would encourage people to open their minds to poetry, to read poetry, and to grow a true appreciation of the written word.

As you know, over time, Gord Downie became an advocate for indigenous issues. Perry Bellegarde is the national chief of the Assembly of First Nations. He writes, "As a man of words, Gord's lyrics and his poetry held up a mirror to Canada.... He was driven to use his platform to make the country he loved a better place. His words were his activism."

The Assembly of First Nations paid tribute to Gord Downie. He was given a star blanket, an eagle feather and a Lakota name, Wicapi Omani, "The Man Who Walks Among the Stars." That is so fitting as, in *Coke Machine Glow*, Gord has a poem called *Starpainters*:

The myth is neither here nor there,
 From the air.
 Just blue lake stains
 On green and purified, parcelled squares:
 A crazy quilt of spearmint,
 Of mustard and honey tones;
 A scuffed-up kitchen floor of tiles
 On top of bones
 With a big trap door.
 Towns down diagonal lines disappear
 And drop out of sight
 Into the night beyond the national night,
 And underneath the grit and glare
 Into unfettered nothingness and thin air,
 As herds of clouds lazily graze
 On thermal sighs of delight.
 The Starpainters are taking over now,
 Their scaffolding is in its place.
 Your anaesthesiologist tonight
 Is washing up and on her way.

Gord Downie was always writing. He referred to it as "lifting the 400-pound feather." In that Maclean's tribute, the poet and editor Damian Rogers says, "Gord is part of a continuum of great Canadian songwriters who are actually poets"—Gordon Lightfoot, Leonard Cohen, Joni Mitchell. "The greatest compliment you can give a poet

is to say she's a rock star. The greatest compliment that you can give a musician is to say he's a poet. Gord Downie is both."

Damian Rogers went on to write, "I can't think of anyone else of our generation who is so deeply engaged in this country's poetry. Not just that he's read by poets, which he is, but also: he reads them. I can't overstate how unusual that is." Gord Downie was a humble genius.

The Premier told me she fully supports this bill, as does the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. I know the positive impact that Windsor's first poet laureate, Marty Gervais, has had on our community, and I believe we will see similar results across Ontario. We need a poet laureate to speak on behalf of poets and to be another spokesperson for the arts in Ontario, to remind us there's more to life than life in the fast lane.

Canada's seventh Parliamentary Poet Laureate was George Elliott Clarke. He wrote an elegy for Gord Downie. I'll just read the final four stanzas:

He's too soon dead who was a son—
A husband, a brother, who knew
Canadian was cinnamon-glaze
Donuts dripping maple syrup,

Or to roam Withrow Park, or strum
A guitar as if effecting
A slap-shot, or find th'exotic
Quite at home—The Group of Seven,

Al Purdy's poems, curried poutine....
He knew that Canadian meant
"Anti-social" poets enjoying
"Long grass" in the wintry stretches,

Pitching the mind's Rocky Mountains
Toward the sun. Yes, he knew that
Canadian means bundling up
With loved ones, and not letting go.

1550

Speaker, we don't want to let Gord Downie go. Let's send this bill to committee and pass it into law, creating a poet laureate position in his honour. To preserve his memory, I believe, is the right thing to do.

I mentioned earlier we have three visitors with us from the Ontario Arts Council. Christen Thomas, actually, is the executive director of the Literary Press Group. Kirsten Gunter is the director of communications at the Ontario Arts Council, and Shoshana Wasser, communications coordinator at the Ontario Arts Council. The OAC will have a role to play in the selection of the first poet laureate. I welcome them this afternoon, and thank you for your support.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Arthur Potts: Much to his mum's and dad's dismay

Horace ate himself one day.

He didn't stop to say his grace,
He just sat down and ate his face.
"We can't have this!" his dad declared.
"If that child is ate he must be shared."
But even as they spoke they saw
That young Horace was eating more and more:
First his legs, his lights, his lungs,
His nose, his ear, his chin, his tongue ...
"Oh, stop him, someone!" Mother cried.
"Those eyeballs would be better fried!"
But all too late, for they were gone,
And H had started on his dong ...
"Oh foolish child!" his father mourned,
"You could have deep-fried that with prawns,
"Some parsley and some tartar sauce ..."
But H was on his second course ...
And there he lay: a boy no more,
Just a stomach, upon the floor ...
None the less since it was his
They ate it—and that's what haggis is.

Those immortal words by Monty Python show the power of words to both educate and to delight. Of course, what they're educating about was what goes into a great Scottish delicacy: haggis. You, of course, know it mirrors and mimics the Robbie Burns Ode to a Haggis, in which he talks about this great Scottish dish. I thought it appropriate to start with the poetry because, as the member from Windsor–Tecumseh said, how important it is for us to understand our culture and to educate people in our communities on the importance of poetry.

I'm so pleased that the member has brought this bill forward, and I'm so grateful to him for this incredible tribute he's done for Gord Downie. I had the pleasure of calling Gord Downie's family. Mike Downie is a constituent of mine—his brother Patrick. I play hockey with Mike. I played hockey with Gord. In fact, I knew Gord Downie more as a hockey player than I did as a musician. Of course, I was familiar with his music. But we played hockey for two hours almost every Friday for about five, six years.

Gord was poetry on ice. He could knock pucks out. We thought they were going in, and he somehow saved them. In fact, I remember a game—we played for two hours in a row. The scores would usually rack up to 12, 14, 9, 13, 11: He was going two hours of a shutout in pick-up hockey with a bunch of very talented hockey players, until the last 30 seconds. I snuck one into the top corner. I kind of felt bad about it, having broken his shutout, but the reality was he was so gracious about it. I bought him a beer afterwards, and that was Gord Downie, an extraordinary man.

Thank you so much to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh. I talked to Mike today and I told him about the bill, and the family. Mike was fully supportive. He thinks this would be a wonderful tribute to his brother. He thinks Gord Downie would really have appreciated it. We'd all like to have had, maybe, Gord Downie be the first poet laureate. But if it immortalizes his name and his

reputation for putting words together in ways that were memorable for generations to come, I'm fully, fully supportive of that.

I also thought I might talk a little about some Shakespearean poetry. We've had the opportunity in this House on many occasions, and at Christmastime, I did a little tribute to the House in rhyming couplets and iambic pentameter. But Shakespeare is extraordinary—in high school, we used to have to learn soliloquies. I don't know if we still do that. I remember, right out of Macbeth:

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly. If the assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease success; that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time ...
[T]hat we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague th' inventor.

I don't think this would be a circumstance that would return to plague an inventor. This would be a circumstance where we could remember an inventor, an inventor of incredible words, of incredible emotions, because that's the legacy that Gord Downie left behind.

I started with Monty Python. Of course, as the member has mentioned, it was another Monte who brought forward a motion in 2009. It was unanimously adopted by the House. I'm also delighted to recognize that the member from Windsor–Tecumseh has brought this bill forward before, and I'm quite surprised that we haven't acted on it yet. I appreciate very much this new sense of timing to immortalize Gord Downie. I commit here to working very closely to see if we can't find a way to get this thing done and adopted so we can establish it.

How expensive would it be for the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport to have someone in their office do a two-year review to find someone who is living in Ontario, who is comfortable writing poetry that reflects the province of Ontario, and then to have them go out and spend time with students in schools? I think it would be a tremendous use of resources and I would fully support it.

Speaker, I started with a little bit of poetry about the haggis, and I will finish with a little bit of poetry about the haggis—Robbie Burns's ode:

Fair fa' your honest, sonsie face,
Great chieftain o the puddin'-race!
Aboon them a' ye tak your place,
Painch, tripe, or thairm:
Weel are ye worthy o' a grace
As lang's my arm.

Thank you for your bill, member for Windsor–Tecumseh. I look forward to supporting it.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: Today we are speaking on Bill 186, put forward by the member from Windsor–Tecumseh. It's to develop a poet laureate for Ontario and in memory of Gord Downie.

I just want to say that I'm very happy to be speaking on this. Gord Downie's music is well loved, and his poetry as well.

I wanted to mention that Gord was born Gordon Edgar Downie in the Kingston area. That's where he met his friends who later became his bandmates in the Tragically Hip, so famous not just in Canada but around the world.

Unfortunately, Gord died of a glioblastoma, a type of brain cancer, on October 17, 2017, at the young age of 53, here in Toronto. He is survived by his four children.

We all know that it became a really heartfelt, emotional outpouring of support for Gord Downie. When he came out with his diagnosis, he didn't go into hiding. He went out and performed across the country. People watched it on TV. Not everybody could make it out to the concert in Kingston, I believe it was.

He became the 2016 Newsmaker of the Year in the Canadian Press. That's something that's typically reserved for us politicians and public servants, so it really was a sort of breach from what the typical person named for that is.

I just want to mention that one of his poems, "Ahead by a Century," was one of his early pieces. I want to read a little bit of it:

First thing we'd climb a tree
And maybe then we'd talk
Or sit silently
And listen to our thoughts
With illusions of someday
Cast in a golden light
No dress rehearsal,
This is our life

These are really the words of a poet, and I think that's what we are trying to convey here. Poetry is something to be celebrated, and, as the member opposite mentioned, it can be such an educational tool.

They played the sound for his very famous song "Bobcaygeon"—they used the word "Bobcaygeon" because they felt they could rhyme it with "constellation." They played it on Parliament Hill. They rang the bells to the tune of the song after Gord had passed. It was one of the many tributes across the country.

Bobcaygeon—I think it's a northern Ontario town, but I think in the poem it was considered an idealistic town. One of the interpretations of the music video for "Bobcaygeon" was it was based on Gord's stance against racism and anti-Semitism. He really was an outspoken person for tolerance and for support of indigenous communities. He always called on governments to do more to help indigenous communities across Ontario and across Canada.

He referenced in the song "Aryan twang," and that was his reference to Naziism. The imagery from the

music video brought to mind for a lot of people the Christie Pits riot, which is an unfortunate legacy of Toronto's history where a lot of Jewish baseball players got injured.

I think it's really interesting that the Tragically Hip wasn't really a political band, yet they are being remembered for a lot of their stances, specifically because of Gord.

1600

I want to tell that you that I'm not really a poet. I leave that more to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh. He's quite famous for his poetry. He takes popular tunes and songs and poems and rewrites them for our enjoyment, to commemorate things that are going on here in the Legislature and holidays, and it adds a certain levity. I know I can't compete with him, but it doesn't mean I can't try. So here's my rewrite of Bobcaygeon:

We left this House this morning
'Bout a quarter after 9,
Could have been Ms. Kathleen Wynne
Who drives me to the wine.

I was walking to my office
A little after 9,
It was in Queen's Park I saw the constellations
Reveal themselves, one riding at a time.

A thought dawned on me this morn,
A man of stature, the House's Speaker,
He thinks of maybe quittin',
Thinks of leavin' it behind.

Walking back to question period this morning,
Bells ringing all around,
Their rings are solemn and hypothetical,
How this session is almost down.

This building in Toronto,
With its checkerboard floors,
Soon it will be vacant,
Another electoral war.

Democracy at its finest,
I think we all agree,
With the wind at our backs and the polls in our favour,
The next government will be PC.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I want to thank Willem in my office for helping me put that together.

I want to thank the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for bringing forward some culture, some recognition of what we can do in the Legislature to make the residents of Ontario feel that they can contribute culturally. It doesn't have to be from outside Ontario; within Ontario, we have so much talent, and it really behooves us to recognize people for all they do and to thank them.

I look forward to celebrating many poets laureate from Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill. I also want to thank the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for bringing it forward.

I don't think anyone can give a better tribute to Gord Downie in their comments than the member has. They were perfect, sir—perfect.

We all know that Gord made a huge contribution to this country, and many, many people will claim him. My claim is not a big one, but Gord was a constituent of mine. He lived in the Riverdale neighbourhood.

I only actually encountered him once. I was canvassing one summer evening and came across him; he answered his door. Here was this very friendly guy who had a national profile who said, "How are you doing? Come on in. Let's have a brief chat." We did. We talked about the neighbourhood. There was no sense of a man at all who was full of himself; just simply a man who was comfortable with who he was, comfortable with the neighbourhood that he lived in and comfortable with strangers—strange politicians—coming to his door. Some days were stranger than other days.

I want to note that the member was entirely correct that we could pass this bill before the House rises. There is nothing here that I think any party would object to. In fact, I think every party would be very happy to say, "We endorsed this bill. We supported it." It's a very simple process.

Many of us have been here before in pre-election periods. In the countdown to the final days, many interesting and novel things occur. I don't think we would actually have to have committee hearings on this, although it might be interesting. I think there would be quite an artistic ferment around those committee hearings. But I think it would be reasonable to have this reading today and have the government bring it back very soon for third and final reading. We could have a very quick vote on that and then get on with it. It makes a lot of sense to me.

Frankly, Speaker, as you're well aware, it would be a very fitting tribute to Gord Downie, to his contribution to this country, to this province and to this community. As well, it would be a very good step in showing the support that exists in this province for the arts. It would be a validation of the arts, stating that we see the huge benefits that come from integrating the arts into our everyday lives.

This bill—I'll just go into some of the background, noting that the term "poet laureate" is conferred on a poet officially appointed by a government or institution and assigned the responsibility of writing poems for special events or occasions. Now, I would say special events being the House coming back after an election and the House rising before an election, I'm sure there would be tragicomic poems that could be written—heavy on the

tragedy, heavy on the comedy—that would be widely appreciated by the people of this province.

It's not clear, apparently, who appointed the first poet laureate, but the idea of a scribe, a writer or someone who writes poetry for a community or for a government is something that has been around for a long time. In fact, I believe the idea originated first in medieval Europe, so it's a long tradition. We wouldn't be breaking a lot of new ground here. I don't think people have to be worried that we'd be setting a precedent that would upend western civilization. We would be continuing in this mainstream of having the arts express what really goes on in our lives.

There are at least 15 countries that have recognized an official poet laureate. In the United States, they have subnational governments that have done this as well.

Here in Canada, we have a Canadian Parliamentary Poet Laureate, who is an appointed officer of the Library of Parliament. It makes complete sense to me. If you want to understand the world, mathematics is a wonderful thing, science is a wonderful thing, but you have to have arts to actually capture the essence and to understand what is at the very core of our lives and express it in a way that moves people, that brings them out of themselves to have a bigger picture of everyday life.

Provinces and territories have appointed poet laureates. It's certainly within our purview and certainly within our capabilities to do exactly the same.

Speaker, there's not a lot more that I need to add. I think that the speech given by the member covered it all, but I do want to recap and I do want to reinforce this to the government: You control the agenda. It would be very, very easy for you to have this come forward. Frankly, all three parties would support it, and I think it would be a really nice thing to see in the headlines of papers around this country.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

L'hon. Nathalie Des Rosiers: Je suis heureuse de me lever pour soutenir le projet de loi.

I want to do this as a way to support poetry as a natural resource and a bountiful resource for all Ontarians. Poetry has a way to express the world, poetry that makes words sing and poetry that captures the hearts and minds of people.

Je veux exprimer ce soutien pour la célébration de la poésie un peu à cause de ma soeur, Pascale Des Rosiers, qui est une poète dont les travaux ont été publiés et traduits, mais seulement en espagnol et non en anglais.

To have lived with someone in my family who breathes poetry, who has used it as a way to express alienation, hope, despair, love, sorrow, pride, motherhood and cancer survival, I know that poetry matters, because words matter. Poetry is an act of speech. Speaking poetry, writing it and sharing it allows so many people to express their traumas and survive them. Whether in rap or in sonnets, poetry is about language in action.

J'aimerais citer un poème de ma soeur, parce que c'est important—aujourd'hui c'est la Journée internationale des femmes. Her poetry is about survival:

Nous savons que la lumière s'accélère
 Nous regardons ce qui bascule et se fracasse
 Nos contradictions nous emprisonnent
 Nos larmes manquent de courage
 Nous sommes des complices désolés

...

De temps en temps
 Il arrive que certains d'entre nous
 Réussissent à se trouver ...
 D'accepter ce cadeau des éclairs
 Le désarmement du coeur

“The disarming of the heart,” which is the last line, is what I think Gord Downie gave to all of us.

I want to say, on International Women's Day, what a great tribute, to have the possibility to speak about poetry. There's a famous saying in French that says, “Les femmes qui lisent sont dangereuses,” or “Women who read are dangerous.” Women who write are even more dangerous.

I want to say: La poésie nous libère, nous inspire et nous fait nous evader.

Gordon Downie and poetry are perfect harmony for all Ontarians.

1610

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm pleased to speak to my colleague and friend Percy Hatfield's PMB, Bill 186, which aims to create a provincial poet laureate position in Ontario in memory of Gord Downie.

I know that the member for Windsor–Tecumseh is a strong supporter of the arts and culture and, in fact, is an accomplished poet in his own right, so it is no surprise that he would champion this cause and that he would be the one to find a way for us to bring more poetry to Ontario's Legislature and across Ontario's communities and schools. He often speaks in rhyme, to the delight of the House and to those watching at home.

In fact, his riding—or the city of Windsor, rather—recently decided to become the capital of poetry by appointing not one but three poets laureate. While several cities in Ontario have a poet laureate, none has three, so Windsor definitely leads as the wordsmiths capital. And who knows? Maybe all that stuff that drives poets—excitement, angst, love, sadness, frustrations of the communities they live in—maybe Windsor has that extra inspiration to support it.

I think it's important, where possible, to provide that space, so people can recite or sing the praises or pitfalls of their own communities and loved ones, and it will be the poet laureate's job to champion that space and opportunity.

This opportunity is even more relevant in smaller cities and places where residents don't have access to

things like museums, ballet, opera, the symphony or other blockbuster art events. Then they have even more reason to look to a poet laureate as a way to promote literature and to contribute and build a thriving arts and culture scene.

My riding has a few thriving arts communities, but Owen Sound has had its poet laureate for about 10 years. Currently, the literary ambassadorship is with Lauren Best, who succeeded Rob Rolfe and Larry Jensen, who shared that role.

Ms. Best is a 27-year-old musician, music instructor and multi-arts educator who was born in Mississauga, but moved to Owen Sound at age nine. She has been writing poetry since she was a child. She's very excited about the opportunity to engage the Owen Sound community into being creative, especially focusing on children and youth and helping them develop an appreciation and maybe even sprout their own voice. She said that it is important to have this platform and the ability to engage with the community creatively. I think that Lauren Best was a great choice because of her energy, and I believe she'll be successful in creating, as she says, "as many ripples" as she can.

I also want to add another comment from her. It's about the work that awaits her in her community, which has a strong tradition of supporting the literary arts. She described it as "kind of like being a surfer dropped on a beach that has really great waves.... You could have been dropped on any beach, but thank goodness you were dropped on this beach."

One of the more passionate local scribes comes from the small community of Clavering: Larry Miller, my friend and MP for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, who like to rhyme off on the Hill. His last poem in Parliament was dedicated to Warton Willie:

Once again on Friday, February 2nd
Wee Warton Willy will be beckoned.

It will be his very first prediction
Done with fervour & conviction.

While he's a rookie in groundhog circles
He'll be far more famous than Steve Urkel.

He'll talk to Mayor Janice in groundhogese
And do it all with a glamorous ease.

Larry also showed off his rhyming skills when he eulogized the old Willie last September, reciting, "Hearts will be heavy, eyes full of mist, / Warton Willie will be Willie Willie missed."

Mr. Speaker:

I'd like to close my remarks with a rhyme, but I don't dare,

For I can't compete with our Larry Miller's poetic fare.

He is a man of deep soul;
He can make rhymes roll and roll.

I'm no match for his literary prestige,
And present here as a mere poetic Maltese.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that poetry leaves me with a feeling that carries hope, and that is something—to go back to the title of this bill—that Gord Downie wanted to leave with Canada.

I support this bill and look forward to meeting Ontario's literary ambassador when he or she is chosen. I would just like to say that I often use poetry. I've done a number of eulogies sadly, but it's a privilege. I often recite poetry as a way to bring a little bit of levity to the situation and to honour those. So I'm a big fan. I'm a big fan of Mr. Hatfield, so I wish you very well and will be proud to support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: Today, it's truly an honour and a pleasure to rise in the House and speak in response to my colleague Percy Hatfield and his bill, Poet Laureate of Ontario Act (In Memory of Gord Downie).

I think that Gord Downie is a very good example of the power of poetry and its lasting power over years and years and years. Another great example is when you hear the poem In Flanders Field, right? It says so much in so few words. I don't have a personal history with Gord Downie. I think that we wish that we all could have. But he has made a big impact in my family's life, as he has in all of ours, on two occasions.

The first occasion: My youngest daughter came home from school and she had a project that she was a bit worried about. The project was that she had to demonstrate a musical group's impact on a country and the meaning of their music. I'm not going to say how old Vicky is, but she's from the generation where their music's a bit—the stuff she listens to is a bit meaningless, in my opinion. She and I went and looked up the Tragically Hip catalogue. We had such an amazing time together, looking through the lyrics and researching what those lyrics truly meant. It was such a bonding experience. I think every Canadian who's ever listened to the Tragically Hip, when you really study—I listen to the Tragically Hip, but I never really studied them until my daughter came home with that project. That made a big difference in our lives.

The second impact the Tragically Hip had on our family—and I'd like to give a shout-out to the Kirkland Lake Festivals Committee. In 2015 the Tragically Hip played for two sold-out shows in northern Ontario in Kirkland Lake. That was a true bonding experience for us all. I don't think anyone in that arena ever felt more Canadian than at those two concerts. It was fantastic. Again, it's a shout-out to the festivals committee because I don't think they made money on those, but they sure brought everyone together and it was an incredible experience. That is something that the Tragically Hip and

Gord Downie have brought to us all. It shows the power of words, the power of well-crafted words, the power of poetry and how poetry can last indefinitely and can truly represent an area.

We've heard that other areas across the world, across the country and across the province have poets laureate. There's also a poet laureate in my riding. The little town of Cobalt has a poet laureate. Cobalt was once named the most historic town in Canada. It had a silver boom in the early 1900s. It went from zero to 30,000 people and now it's at 1,200. But now, because of electric cars, it might boom again. Now it's not silver that's in demand; now it's cobalt. I would be remiss if I didn't read a poem by Ann Margetson, the poet laureate of Cobalt:

The Blacksmith

Fred LaRose was a blacksmith in Cobalt town,
 At a log cabin near the rail lines, he often did frown,
 For he worked long hours to make a living quite hard,
 Hammering and toiling away with great regard
 For the work he had to do, and a fox often came to
 view,
 That drove him crazy seeing the fox, what could he do
 To the pesky fox looking all cute his head on one side,
 His great frustration he found so very hard to hide.
 Working away one day with his furnace and hammer,
 His frustration made him splutter a little, then
 stammer,
 He lifted his hand and sent his hammer flying high,
 But the fox ran off without a yelp, whimper or cry.
 Then the hammer hit the rock and there before his
 eyes
 Was the wonderful sight of silver, such a great
 surprise.
 After a while he was happy to sell his share of silver
 bright
 And all the cobalt and other ore that was hidden from
 sight.
 He sold his claim for quite a good price and retired in
 Quebec,
 Although he lost lots of capital, he thought, "Oh, what
 the heck."
 The log cabin is still standing but moved to safer
 ground,
 I wonder if the ghost of the fox close by has ever been
 found?

Basically, that is the legend of how silver was found in Cobalt. The train was being built to get to the clay fields actually, to get to farming country. The legend is that Fred LaRose threw his axe at a fox, and that's how they found silver. No one really knows if that legend is 100% accurate, but Fred LaRose was a blacksmith in Cobalt.

Many people came to Cobalt, many people made a fortune in Cobalt, and many people, as did Mr. LaRose, lost the fortune that they made in Cobalt. But it shows how the power of poetry, in a few verses, can show the story of a town, of a province, of a country, and that's

why we fully support the bill to create a poet laureate and we fully agree that it could be done before the House rises.

1620

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. James J. Bradley: I want to begin, Madam Speaker, by commending the member for Windsor–Tecumseh for bringing forward this particular initiative this afternoon, because it pays tribute appropriately to those who are fans of Gord Downie, and there are many people who certainly are that.

I also want to commend Arthur Potts, the member for Beaches–East York, with his very personal discussion about his relationship with Gord Downie and the Downie family. It really is an emotional loss for individuals who have known Gord Downie and the Tragically Hip as a band. It was a real emotional loss when he met his death, which was so public because of his fame throughout this country.

The power of poetry has been mentioned here, and indeed it is very significant. Poets laureate around the world have had a profound effect on the nation or the province or the municipality, or just the group of people with whom they've been associated. Gord Downie is no exception to that, because he did have that profound effect on Canadians.

I know that in my own city of St. Catharines, councillor Bruce Williamson from Port Dalhousie ward was talking about Gord Downie at council and knew that Gord Downie was ill at the time. He was really hopeful that he would, in fact, be honoured appropriately with the Order of Canada; there's a procedure you have to go through, which is somewhat bureaucratic. I think everyone was delighted that Gord Downie was indeed inducted into the Order of Canada.

I know people were thinking of the band, but Gord himself was a genuine leader and the causes he took up were causes that you don't normally, but sometimes, find with the head of a rock band or the head of a musical band. It happens sometimes; there are instances of that. But certainly the causes he took up personally were ones which had an impact on the federal government, particularly as it relates to policies related to the indigenous population in Canada.

I know Kingston was very proud of Gord Downie. The other thing I think that people liked about him was he was very down-to-earth. If I think of the music, the music itself is very pleasing to people, but in addition to the music and perhaps more important than the music were the words themselves, as the member for Windsor–Tecumseh has so eloquently shared information about Gord Downie and the poetry that he left with us. That did have an effect on people, on their own psyche perhaps, but also their own view of our nation and the issues before us.

He was truly Canadian. We Canadians tend to not be braggarts, to not be expressing our pride about a lot of

things, but even though Gord Downie and the Tragically Hip were extremely popular with Canadians, beyond our borders, people appreciated the music and the words of the Tragically Hip, led by Gord Downie.

I think it's most appropriate. We deal with a lot of issues in this House, some which are very serious issues—and I think this is a serious one by the way, but very serious issues where we're confronting one another over political philosophy. What I hear in the debate this afternoon, which is so encouraging, is that people from all of the political parties—actually, of the four parties represented in this House, three of those parties have had representatives who have spoken this afternoon in glowing terms about Gord Downie and have commended the member for Windsor–Tecumseh for taking up this particular cause. I should never predict the outcome of votes. My suspicion is, however, that this will be a unanimous vote.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: In the remaining time that I have this afternoon, I also wish to add my voice in thanks to the member for Windsor–Tecumseh. I know, even in my short period of time here, I've come to recognize and hear of his dedication to poetry and his passion for music, arts and culture across Ontario.

Here in Ontario, we do have such a strong, vibrant community of artists and poets to recognize and to champion. When we look at Gord Downie, as so many members in this House have spoken about, he's made such an incredible impact just in this House, with the amount of people he has interacted with. The member for Sault Ste. Marie mentioned briefly to me that Gord actually attended Algoma University in Sault Ste. Marie. The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London mentioned that he waited outside of H&M in university when the newest Tragically Hip album was coming out. I think that just speaks to the testament that Gord brought into this world, whether it was his work in philanthropy or his work for indigenous reconciliation and protecting water rights. The amount of work that he put in should definitely be recognized by this piece of legislation.

It is interesting to note that our federal cousins in the federal Parliament have a poet laureate. We see poets laureate in many municipalities across our province and in various provinces. It's a fitting tribute to one of the truly great Ontarian artists that we bring forward this position, the position of poet laureate, which recognizes his contributions and also recognizes the importance of arts, music and culture in our communities.

Before time runs out, I wanted to let everyone know that actually, one of the most amazing things I've had the opportunity to see was in my home community in Grimsby. Last summer, during the final tour, the total of Main Street in Grimsby was shut down. They projected the final concert of the Tragically Hip on Main Street in Grimsby, and hundreds and hundreds of people from across the community, children of all ages, people I

would say from age zero to 100, were there. It was really a wonderful way to bring the community together, people who might be of different political stripes, different beliefs, different values, but were able to recognize one of the truly great Canadians.

I wish to thank the member for Windsor–Tecumseh for his contribution today.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I return to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh to wrap up.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I really don't know where to begin. I want to thank everyone who spoke so eloquently this afternoon.

I brought the bill forward, but I believe that if it passes, it's something we can all share in and say, "I made that happen." I'd like to see that, because it's a non-partisan bill. It's brought to pay homage to a great Canadian. Mr. Tabuns told us how he went door-to-door, and he knocked on this door, and this humble genius invited him in. I'll tell you how humble he was: He had a family van, Gord Downie. He called it the Black Potato or the Stinkmobile.

There's wine in the LCBO, Tragically Hip wine—red and white. This was an uncommon band, an uncommon band of brothers, as I've mentioned.

Gord Downie used to say it's "like lifting a 400-pound feather every day." I know there's a Van Morrison song that says that his job is turning lead into gold. That's what the creativity is of writers. They have this process to go through and at the end, there's magic.

I want to thank the Premier for telling me it was okay to say that this bill had her full support. If it does happen indeed, it will be partly because of the Premier's support for this bill.

In my home riding in Windsor, we have Marty Gervais. He's been a great poet laureate. He's going to move on up to poet laureate emeritus. We're going to have two more, and one of them is going to be a youth poet laureate. That is something that we can do across Ontario, as we hear more and more communities tell us that they have their own poet laureates.

Mr. Potts, thank you, sir, for knowing Mr. Downie and bringing that true-life story to the Legislature this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES
AND FORESTRY SPECIAL PURPOSE
ACCOUNT TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE
DU COMPTE À DES FINS PARTICULIÈRES
DU MINISTÈRE DES RICHESSES
NATURELLES ET DES FORÊTS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We will first deal with ballot item number 30, standing in the name of Mr. Yurek.

Mr. Yurek has moved second reading of Bill 204, An Act to amend the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Okay.

All those in favour of the motion, please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion, please say “nay.”

I believe the nays have it.

This will be a recorded vote at the end of this portion.

STUDENT ABSENTEEISM
AND PROTECTION ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR L'ABSENTÉISME
ET LA PROTECTION DES ÉLÈVES

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Ms. Hoggarth has moved second reading of Bill 198, An Act to amend the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017 and the Education Act to protect students who are habitually absent from or late arriving to school. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion, please say “nay.”

I believe the ayes have it.

Interjection: On division.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Carried on division.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I will turn to the member: Which committee does the member want to refer the bill to?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Okay, the member has asked that the bill be referred to regulations and private bills. Agreed? I hear “agreed.” Congratulations.

POET LAUREATE OF ONTARIO ACT
(IN MEMORY OF GORD DOWNIE), 2018

LOI DE 2018
SUR LE POÈTE OFFICIEL DE L'ONTARIO
(À LA MÉMOIRE DE GORD DOWNIE)

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Mr. Hatfield has moved second reading of Bill 186, An Act to establish the Poet Laureate of Ontario in memory of Gord Downie. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I hear “carry.”

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I will turn to the member to hear which committee the member wants to refer the bill to.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The Legislative Assembly, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Agreed? We agree.

MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES
AND FORESTRY SPECIAL PURPOSE
ACCOUNT TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE
DU COMPTE À DES FINS PARTICULIÈRES
DU MINISTÈRE DES RICHESSES
NATURELLES ET DES FORÊTS

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): We have a deferred vote. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1631 to 1636.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Members, please take your seats.

Mr. Yurek has moved second reading of Bill 204, An Act to amend the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bisson, Gilles	Martow, Gila	Smith, Todd
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Miller, Norm	Tabuns, Peter
Coe, Lorne	Oosterhoff, Sam	Vanthof, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Romano, Ross	Walker, Bill
Hatfield, Percy	Scott, Laurie	Yurek, Jeff

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Baker, Yvan	Dickson, Joe	Matthews, Deborah
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Dong, Han	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Bradley, James J.	Duguid, Brad	Moridi, Reza
Colle, Mike	Hoggarth, Ann	Potts, Arthur
Coteau, Michael	Hunter, Mitzie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Delaney, Bob	MacCharles, Tracy	Sandals, Liz
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	Mangat, Amrit	Zimmer, David
Dhillon, Vic	Martins, Cristina	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 15; the nays are 23.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negated.

VISITOR

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I recognize the member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I wanted to introduce the House to Susan Pedler, who is a professor of journalism at Niagara College. She worked with Percy Hatfield at CBC in Windsor. I spoke with her class today, and I wanted to shout her out in the House.

Thank you, journalism students, for doing great work.

ROYAL ASSENT
SANCTION ROYALE

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in her office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): The following are the titles of the bills to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to implement measures with respect to policing, coroners and forensic laboratories and to enact, amend or repeal certain other statutes and revoke a regulation / Loi mettant en oeuvre des mesures concernant les services policiers, les coroners et les laboratoires médico-légaux et édictant, modifiant ou abrogeant certaines autres lois et abrogeant un règlement.

An Act respecting fairness in procurement / Loi concernant l'équité en matière de marchés publics.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Orders of the day? I recognize the Minister of Research, Innovation and Science.

Hon. Reza Moridi: Madam Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): The minister has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it. Carried.

The House will be adjourning until Monday, March 19 at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1640.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac
Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Tonia Grannum, Valerie Quioc Lim, William Short
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Hon. / L'hon. Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Ballard, Hon. / L'hon. Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brown, Patrick (IND)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of International Trade / Ministre du Commerce International
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism / Ministre délégué à l'Action contre le racisme
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Seniors Affairs / Ministre des Affaires des personnes âgées
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	Minister of Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement économique et de la Croissance
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Des Rosiers, Hon. / L'hon. Nathalie (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
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
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Hon. / L'hon. Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales Minister Responsible for Small Business / Ministre responsable des Petites Entreprises
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs Minister Responsible for Accessibility / Ministre responsable de l'Accessibilité
MacLaren, Jack (IND)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, 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
McDonnell, 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	St. Paul's	
Vacant	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Catherine Fife
Granville Anderson, James J. Bradley
Bob Delaney, Catherine Fife
Michael Harris, Monte Kwinter
Michael Mantha, Mario Sergio
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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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

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permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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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

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permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Sam Oosterhoff, Randy Pettapiece
Shafiq Qadri
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Amrit Mangat
Jim McDonnell, Arthur Potts
Shafiq Qadri, Ross Romano
Liz Sandals, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

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Joe Dickson, Amrit Mangat
Michael Mantha, Deborah Matthews
Monte McNaughton, Laurie Scott
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bob Delaney, Vic Dhillon
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Randy Hillier, Lisa MacLeod
Liz Sandals
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Ted McMeekin
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lou Rinaldi
Granville Anderson, James J. Bradley
Grant Crack, Joe Dickson
Jennifer K. French, Jack MacLaren
Deborah Matthews, Ted McMeekin
Lou Rinaldi, Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Lorne Coe, Mike Colle
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Ann Hoggarth, Gila Martow
Ted McMeekin, Peter Tabuns
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley