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Monday
16 July 2018

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Lundi
16 juillet 2018

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Todd Decker

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 16 July 2018

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 16 juillet 2018

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Let us pray.

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): This being the very first sitting Monday of the month, I would ask everyone to join me in singing the Canadian national anthem.

Singing of O Canada.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I wish to inform the House that we are graced with the presence of a former member of provincial Parliament who was a representative in the 38th, 39th, 40th and 41st Parliaments representing Parkdale–High Park: Rev. Cheri DiNovo. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

MEMBERS' ROLL

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that the Clerk has laid upon the table the roll of members elected at the general election of 2018.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I also beg to inform the House that Ms. Horwath, member for the electoral district of Hamilton Centre, is recognized as the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition. Congratulations.

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): As members will be well aware, this current Legislature, just beginning its regular work today, has amongst its membership seven MPPs who were elected as candidates of the Liberal Party of Ontario, and one MPP who was elected as a candidate of the Green Party of Ontario.

On their own, none of these eight MPPs is a member of a recognized party within the definition of such, as set out in standing order 2, which states, "Recognized party" means a party caucus of eight or more members of the Legislative Assembly."

Accordingly, these eight MPPs are each, separately, independent members of the assembly for the procedural purposes of the standing orders. Members will know that the standing orders also provide the Speaker the discretion to permit independent members to participate in certain proceedings, one of which is question period. I am therefore using this opportunity to indicate to the

House how I have chosen to facilitate the independent members to use their limited right to ask questions.

An independent member must advise the Speaker in writing of their request to participate in the proceedings to which they are entitled, and, for the record, I have received a written request from the member for Ottawa South, Mr. Fraser, asking that I permit him to ask a question during oral questions today. The member for Guelph, Mr. Schreiner, has also provided me with a written request for the opportunity to ask a question as provided by the standing orders.

In considering my response to these requests, I do have a directly applicable and relatively recent precedent to help guide my decision in this matter, being the period immediately after the 2003 general election when one parliamentary group consisted of only seven MPPs, one short of the threshold for recognized party status, just as the situation is now.

Eventually in 2003, the House arrived at its own agreement on the extent of participation of those seven independent members and provided then-Speaker Curling with its recommendation on how he should exercise his discretionary role under the standing orders, which he accepted. Until that point, the Speaker recognized one independent member during question period each day to ask one question and one supplementary question.

I believe that emulating the approach taken by my predecessor in this chair at that time is a reasonable and fair way to respect and ensure the rights of the independent members of this House. I believe that this will provide a consistent and predictable flow to the daily question period, is suitably proportional to their membership in the House, and does not either favour or penalize when it comes to the entire number of opportunities that all members have to ask questions in question period.

One independent member will therefore have the opportunity to ask a question daily. Each of the eight independent members will be able to ask a question once every eight sitting days. I will ensure that each of them has the opportunity over time to ask a question on different days of the sitting week, and not always the same day every two weeks. I will be recognizing Mr. Fraser to ask his question today, as he has requested.

I thank all members for your attention while I addressed this matter.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand the member for Timmins–James Bay has a point of privilege.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of all members of the opposition—specifically as well the members of the official opposition. We know that last week the government introduced its throne speech—rightfully so—and the government in so doing decided, as is one of the practices around here, to give the media an advance copy which was embargoed. What the point of privilege is about is that we as members, especially members of the opposition, were not afforded the same opportunity, and not being able to get that information means that members of the opposition were put at a disadvantage.

I want to read my point of privilege: “Pursuant to standing order 21(c), I write to give notice of my intent to rise on a point of privilege prior to question period on Monday, July 16 ... concerning a possible breach of privilege with regard to the government’s failure to provide copies of the throne speech to opposition members despite the fact copies were distributed to members of the media prior to its delivery in the House.

“New Democrats have no issue with the established practice of providing embargoed material to the media in advance of its presentation, understanding that their ability to digest and accurately communicate the merits and shortcomings of policy measures to the public is an essential element of a healthy democracy. It is not our intent to curtail this practice, or to deny the government its right to utilize this tool. However, there is cause for concern when this same consideration is not extended to the House itself”—that goes to the crux of what this point of privilege is about—“and members are denied the information they need to do their jobs effectively.”

1040

Now, there was a similar situation that happened in Ottawa, Speaker—and we provide the quotations from Speaker Milliken—back on March 19, 2001, where the government was introducing a bill to the House. They provided the media with an opportunity for a briefing, but members were not allowed and were not given that briefing prior.

Speaker Milliken, as a result of members of the opposition then getting up on a point of privilege, ruled the following:

“In a March 19, 2001 ruling, Speaker Milliken found that a government decision to disclose materials to the media before tabling them in the House of Commons while at the same time denying access to MPs constituted a breach of privilege, noting:

““With respect to material to be placed before Parliament, the House must take precedence ... not only so that members themselves may be well informed, but also [in light of] the pre-eminent role which the House plays and must play in the legislative affairs of the nation.”

“More than just a nod to tradition, the throne speech is the first real look at the broad strokes of a government’s plan to address the issues facing the electorate and often the first opportunity that members have to exercise their responsibility to examine and scrutinize the vision put forward by an administration. Given this significance—

and the reality that it is often the sole item of business on the legislative agenda following delivery—it comes as no surprise that the bulk of the interaction between the media and members on all sides of the House will focus on this address designed to provide a degree of insight into a government’s plan.

“By withholding access to the throne speech—an item of business that is historically kept confidential until delivered in the chamber—it is our belief that the government undermined the opposition’s ability to effectively engage the media on the questions that would likely be posed about the measures outlined in the speech and, by extension, their potential implications on the people of the province of Ontario. This prioritized access is central to the role that the opposition plays in a parliamentary context and must be upheld....”

I go again to the ruling of Speaker Milliken:

“... the issue of denying members information that they need to do their work has been the key consideration for the Chair in reviewing this particular question of privilege. To deny to members information concerning business that is about to come before the House, while at the same time providing such information to media that will likely be questioning members about this business, is a situation that the Chair cannot condone.”

Clearly, Speaker Milliken sets the bar and says that the House has to be treated according to the rules and precedents of the House.

“With modern media’s ability to communicate information to the public almost instantaneously, upholding this right of equitable access goes beyond simply protecting the rights of elected officials; it is an essential part of making sure that MPPs have the time, opportunity and information necessary” to execute their roles and responsibilities, be it to critique or to praise the policy initiative. “The government must respect the established rules of engagement for our democracy to operate as intended.

“It is for these reasons I hope that you rule in favour of a prima facie case of contempt and allow this House to investigate the matter further.”

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Not gonna happen.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That’s interesting.

“I look forward to the opportunity to present this point of privilege in the House.”

I’ll just conclude by saying that it’s an important test this early in this Legislature’s sitting, and I’m not going to be long; I just want to make this final point. We need to, as members of this House on all sides, make sure that we are able to do our jobs. As we said, we don’t argue with the fact that the government has certain tools that they can use and that’s the way this place operates. But all members of the opposition must be given the same treatment when it comes to tools, when it comes to being able to do our jobs in order to hold this government to account or to give them ideas on what we think needs to be done. For them not to treat the opposition equally, I think, is an insult to all of us as members.

We look for your decision on this matter.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I appreciate the member for Timmins and his presentation.

Are there any other members who would like to speak to this matter? Government House leader.

Hon. Todd Smith: It's an honour to rise as the government House leader and respond to the point raised by my colleague the member from Timmins.

I would question whether or not the appropriate time was given to you, the Speaker, this morning, in filing this notice, and to the government House leader as well.

The opposition House leader, the member for Timmins, has served in the Legislature long enough to know that the precedents on this matter he raised do not support a breach-of-privilege argument. As Speaker Edighoffer noted in his ruling on June 10, 1986:

"However, it is clear from the precedents in this House and in other jurisdictions that parliamentary privilege does not extend and never has extended to requiring policy statements or announcements to be made in the House, regardless of the importance of the subject."

While the government acknowledges the importance of the speech from the throne, we submit that there was no attempt to publicly release the contents of the speech from the throne prior to it being read by Her Honour in this House. The government exhausted considerable means to protect the confidentiality of the speech from the throne. Early copies were all marked "confidential" and were kept under embargo. These very actions were taken to protect the primacy of the House.

However, the last Speaker of this Legislature delivered a definitive statement regarding any pre-emptive disclosure in his ruling on April 14, 2014:

"However, no Speaker has ever found that the snubbing of the Legislature in this manner has amounted even to a valid point of order—there being no standing order or practice to require it—let alone to a breach of privilege or contempt of the Legislature."

It should be noted that I personally delivered both English and French copies of the speech from the throne to the members from Timmins and Timiskaming–Cochrane in the chamber immediately prior to the reading of the speech from the throne, a courtesy that I have never observed in this House, to the best of my recollection. My office also had copies of the document in both official languages available in the opposition members' lobby immediately prior to the beginning of Her Honour's address to the Legislature, and receipt of those documents was acknowledged by a representative of the official opposition. All of this was done to reflect the important role that members and the Legislature play in the functioning of our democracy.

While the speech from the throne is distinct from a typical ministerial statement in the standing orders, those same standing orders provide no requirement for pre-emptive disclosure of the speech from the throne to members of recognized opposition parties. The government nevertheless followed the procedures outlined in standing order 35(c) for the disclosure of ministerial statements with its pre-emptive disclosure of the speech to the members for Timmins and Timiskaming–Cochrane. That standing order does not envision a timeline under

which disclosure must be made, except to say that it must be done "at or before the time the statement is made."

The question as to whether the speech from the throne requires different disclosure rules from that of a ministerial statement is not covered by the standing orders and must be treated as a matter of constitutional convention, which means, as Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, sixth edition, notes in citation 168(5), "The Speaker will not give a decision upon a constitutional question nor decide a question of law, though the same may be raised on a point of order or privilege."

I'll expand on all of these arguments, Speaker, in my written submission. I appreciate the member from Timmins raising the points here today. I look forward to your decision and your ruling on this matter. Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I appreciate the submission from the member for Timmins, as well as from the government House leader. I will review it and respond in due course.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I also want to inform the House that we have another former member here today, who represented the riding of St. Paul's in the 37th, 38th and 39th Parliaments: Michael Bryant is here with us today. Welcome.

Before I ask for oral questions, I want to acknowledge that we are met today on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I want to begin by welcoming all members to our first question period of this Parliament, and I congratulate the Speaker again on his election to his important role.

My question is for the Premier. People deserve a Premier not beholden to lobbyists and insiders, someone who tells the people of Ontario exactly what he's up to. But instead, this Premier is not even three weeks into the job, and he's already telling Ontarians one thing and doing the exact opposite behind closed doors.

Why did the Premier say that the CEO of Hydro One would get "zero, absolutely zero," when he knew that the CEO would walk away with millions?

Hon. John Yakabuski: There's no severance.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question was to the Premier, Speaker.

1050

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, congratulations. And congratulations to the Leader of the Opposition.

If I could remind the Leader of the Opposition that when we were out campaigning, we ran clearly on getting rid of the CEO and getting rid of the board. The

news media went around and said it would cost \$10 million. I'm here to tell you that there was zero severance, absolutely zero severance.

We were given a clear mandate to reduce hydro rates by 12%, and that's exactly what we're going to do. Unlike the opposition leader, next month—if you were in charge, there'd be 7,000 people without jobs out at the Pickering hydro facility. You were going to close hydro down, and there'd be 7,000 people wondering where they'd get their next paycheck—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It looks like this Premier is going to be as honest in this House as he was on the campaign trail.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Withdraw.

The Premier said that the payout to Mayo Schmidt was zero, absolutely zero. But now we know that Mr. Schmidt will actually walk away with incentives worth at least \$9 million, maybe even more, Speaker.

Will the Premier tell Ontarians exactly how much his backroom deal will end up costing Hydro One rate-payers?

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, thank you for the question. I just want to remind you that the CEO of hydro is getting a zero severance.

In 2016, 2017 and 2018, under the Liberal government, with your support—

Interjection: You propped them up.

Hon. Doug Ford: You propped them up to have stock options. The stock options are what you're talking about, but I can assure you, the CEO had the same benefits as any other employee with their pensions and their benefits. Again, the CEO of hydro is gone. The board is gone. We're turning the page when it comes to hydro rates. We have the highest hydro rates in North America. We will reduce hydro rates by 12%.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'd like to remind the Premier of this province that the New Democrats are the only party that has firmly stood against the privatization of our electricity system, Speaker, and we will always be on the side of a public electricity system, unlike the Conservative government that started the privatization of electricity in our province when they were in government last time.

Premier Wynne's six-million-dollar man is now Premier Ford's nine-million-dollar man, and counting, thanks to whatever secret deal the Conservatives cooked up behind closed doors. It's time for this Premier to come clean with the people of Ontario. How much does this secret deal really cost, and when will he make it public?

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, as I campaigned throughout the province, and you were side by side in many cases, we said very clearly to the people who gave us the mandate that we were going to reduce hydro rates by 12%. That's exactly what we're going to do. We're turning the page at Hydro One.

I want to remind the public: God forbid, if you ever got elected, they would be looking at hydro rates double the cost of what they're looking at right now.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. It's the job of the Premier to do more than respond to lobbyists and repay backroom deals, but since taking office, we've seen this Premier making backroom deals that are driven by what's best for lobbyists and insiders, not what's best for Ontario. Instead of helping everyday families, he's quietly delivering favours for big polluters, ticket scalpers and his social conservative friends.

Why is this Premier making backroom deals that help insiders and Conservative friends instead of helping the people of Ontario?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I want to remind the Leader of the Opposition that we're here for the people. We're here to reduce taxes. We're going to create good-paying jobs. We're going to reduce the hydro rates and get this economy going in the province of Ontario once again. We will be the engine of Ontario. We will create thousands and thousands of great-paying jobs and put money back into the taxpayers' pocket instead of the government's pocket.

I know the Leader of the Opposition believes in big government; everything should go through government. We believe in empowering the people, not empowering the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: When the Premier cancelled cap-and-trade, he was doing what is best for big polluters, Speaker. The cost of ripping up Ontario's cap-and-trade agreements and reimbursing companies for billions and billions of dollars in suddenly worthless credit will be massive. The cost of inaction on climate change will hurt Ontarians today and for generations to come.

Which big polluters lobbied the Premier to let them off the hook and stick families with the bill?

Hon. Doug Ford: Leader of the Opposition, we campaigned on getting rid of the cap-and-trade carbon tax scam. I want to remind the Leader of the Opposition that we're going to save \$790 million by doing that for the taxpayers of Ontario. We're going to save \$285 per family, again putting money back into the taxpayers' pocket instead of big government's pocket. We're going to start respecting the taxpayers for the next four years.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, the question is, how many billions and billions of dollars is it going to cost to cancel those contracts? Mr. McGuinty told us it

was going to cost \$40 million to cancel two gas plants and it cost \$1.1 billion. So we're very much looking forward to seeing what it's going to cost.

Look, decision after decision is being driven by the Premier's desire to deliver for his friends and for lobbyists. The Premier made a backroom deal with Tanya Granic Allen, Charles McVety and other far-right lobbyists to force an outdated sex-ed curriculum on students and drag Ontario back to 1998. It doesn't help students, Speaker. It doesn't help the safety of students at risk. It ignores the responsibilities that we have to teach children about consent and safety in school.

Why does the Premier not care about queer young people and their safety? Why does this Premier care more about the favours that he owes to social conservatives than he does about keeping young people—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you, Premier?

Hon. Doug Ford: Mr. Speaker, through you to the Leader of the Opposition: We're going to be very clear. We're going to govern for the people instead of for the government. We're going lower taxes for the people. We're going to reduce taxes on small businesses that have been struggling—absolutely struggling. It makes us uncompetitive, cap-and-trade and the carbon tax. It puts a burden on the backs of small businesses, medium and large businesses. It also puts a burden on the taxpayers of Ontario. We're going to make sure, once we get rid of cap-and-trade and the carbon tax, that we're going to reduce gas prices by 10 cents a litre, putting more money into the taxpayers' pocket.

SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS UNIT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier.

Nobody voted for business to be conducted in secret and behind closed doors, Speaker. Nobody voted for that, and nobody voted for Ontario to be dragged backwards, but that's what this Premier is doing.

On July 3, it was revealed that the Premier had secretly slammed the brakes on the new Ontario Special Investigations Unit Act. This particular law, with new oversight tools to help increase public trust and accountability, was the result of two full years of consultation and two rounds of committee hearings, but the Premier ignored all of that and ignored the voices of Ontarians.

Who lobbied the Premier to quietly scrap the rules on police oversight?

Hon. Doug Ford: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

1100

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Basically, the SIU is a matter that is presently being looked at. It's our understanding that—I am being briefed on it presently, so I don't have any actual information on that. But I will report back to the House when I have a response.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, it's pretty worrisome that we have a minister responsible who doesn't know

the file at all, not even enough to even give a semblance of a response to a question in the Legislature.

New Democrats stand with communities across Ontario in our strong support for updating the laws that govern police oversight and protect the public trust in policing. The Tulloch review took over a year, involved 17 public hearings and received 1,500 submissions—including from police. The previous government's legislation took another year and involved two rounds of public hearings and submissions, including from police.

It wasn't perfect, but even the head of the Police Association of Ontario says that he accepts the need for police accountability and transparency. So, who lobbied the Premier—apparently unbeknownst to the minister—to ignore Ontarians and stop these new oversight rules from coming into play?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional—

Hon. Doug Ford: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I thank the Leader of the Opposition—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, if he wishes to respond—he has to respond or he has to refer it to another minister.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Yes, I will refer it to the Attorney General.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Attorney General.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Leader of the Opposition for her question and congratulate her on her victory.

We pressed pause on this legislation so that we could take the time to conduct a full and thorough review of the legislation by consulting with experts, police services and the public. That is what we have done. We have pressed pause on this. We want to work with our front-line police officers to make sure that we have the right answer on this issue.

The special investigations unit is still in place, and so that unit, the SIU, is still doing its work. But we have pressed pause on that portion of the legislation.

TAXATION

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Again, congratulations, Mr. Speaker, on your election. I know you will be a truly dedicated and capable servant of this House.

My question is to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. I also want to congratulate the minister on his new job.

Premier Doug Ford and the government for the people campaigned on a plan for making life more affordable for families and respecting taxpayers. That starts with scrapping the uncompetitive and unaffordable cap-and-trade carbon tax. It didn't protect the environment. Instead, it only jacked up the price of gasoline, home heating and everyday items like groceries and clothing.

Could the minister please update the House on the government for the people's progress scrapping this tax,

and tell the people of Ontario how much this will save families?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Hon. Rod Phillips: Thank you also to the member for his tough but fair question. I'd like to congratulate the member from Perth–Wellington on his re-election. I know that he is an expert and an excellent representative of his constituents.

As the Premier has already stated today, our government is moving swiftly to scrap the Liberals' cap-and-trade carbon tax. Cabinet has already taken measures to this effect, and we'll be introducing legislation this session to finish the job. Scrapping the Liberals' cap-and-trade carbon tax will save the average family \$285 a year, and it's a first step towards our commitment to reduce gas taxes by 10 cents.

We received a strong mandate from the people of Ontario to scrap this ineffective tax and we're delivering on that promise. Promises made, promises kept, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Back to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks: I'm glad to hear that the government for the people is delivering on its promise. When I went door to door, I heard time and time again that life was harder and more unaffordable under the previous government. I know the people of Perth–Wellington will be happy to hear we are scrapping the carbon tax. Unfortunately, other parties in this House will stop at nothing to impose another carbon tax on the people of Ontario. One member opposite has even said he will fight to impose the highest carbon tax in North America onto the people of Ontario, raising gas prices by 35 cents per litre.

Could the minister please tell the people of this House what measures the government for the people is taking to protect Ontario families and job creators from future carbon taxes?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Thank you for the follow-up question, through you, Mr. Speaker.

Our government has been clear: no carbon taxes now, no carbon taxes ever. The people of Ontario can't afford one; they can't afford one now and they can't afford one in the future, so they won't have one.

Our government will be introducing legislation to scrap the Liberals' cap-and-trade carbon tax once and for all. Our government will challenge any efforts from the federal government to impose a carbon tax on the people of Ontario. While the members opposite may fancy themselves as carbon tax crusaders, the government will be standing with the people. Ontario families, as I said, will save \$285 a year. We will lower gas taxes by 10 cents a litre and put more money in their pockets. It's real change for the people.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Late on Friday, the energy minister announced

that he was ripping up 758 renewable energy contracts signed by the provincial government. We don't know why these particular projects were chosen. The decision was made behind closed doors. We do know that many of these projects are owned by municipalities, public utilities, local farmers, school boards and First Nations. And the Premier says he will pass legislation to down-load the cancellation costs from the province onto these local communities.

Will the Premier tell us how much cost and disruption he will force on local communities, First Nations, households and farmers as a result of his backroom decision?

Hon. Doug Ford: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Greg Rickford: On my first occasion to rise in this place, I want to thank my wife and children for their love and support and the constituents of the great Kenora–Rainy River district for electing me to this magnificent place, and to attempt to fill with humility the shoes of the great Leo Bernier, the former emperor of the north, as he was fondly known, from the Kenora–Rainy River district.

For the past couple of weeks, there's been a palpable excitement across Ontario as projects that represented wasteful spending by the previous government have been cancelled. Mr. Speaker, make no mistake about it: This is not about anything more than a savings of \$790 million to the taxpayers.

Applause.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Thank you.

It represents the first in a number of steps that we're going to take to make sure that every Ontarian sees a savings on their energy bills moving forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Back to the Premier: One of the affected communities is the small northern Ontario town of Blind River in the riding of Algoma–Manitoulin. Eight years ago, the Minister of Energy—the current minister—applauded the town's decision to take out a massive federal loan under the federal Conservative government to build a solar energy project under the Green Energy Act. The deal went bad and the town of 3,600 is nearly \$50 million in debt with nothing to show for it.

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Instead of helping the town recover, the minister is making things worse. Instead of making backroom decisions, forcing unknown costs onto small towns and First Nations, why won't the Premier review these contracts in a transparent process that is based on evidence and the public interest?

Hon. Greg Rickford: An interesting question about northern Ontario coming from a member from downtown Toronto, Mr. Speaker. Let me tell you, after years of working for the people across northern Ontario, what they were talking about: an expensive way of life; longer winters than most; colder than most; people making choices between heating and eating.

The goal and the promise of this platform and Premier Ford were to reduce hydro rates. That's what northern

Ontarians were focused on. That's what they told us on June 7. And that's exactly what we're going to deliver.

PHARMACARE

Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: My question is to the Minister of Health. I would like to start by congratulating the minister for being tasked with this important responsibility. I know that she will do great work for her constituents and the people of Ontario.

I was proud to see that the government for the people wasted no time getting to work, rolling up its sleeves and finding ways to ensure taxpayers are getting value for money and programs are run as effectively and efficiently as possible. This is evidenced by the government for the people's positive changes to the OHIP+ program, saving hard-earned tax dollars without compromising the services families depend on.

Mr. Speaker, could the Minister of Health please update the members of this House on the government's changes to OHIP+?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the member for the question. I too would like to congratulate the member from Brampton South for being elected by his constituents and for the trust that they have in him.

Within days of being sworn in, our government announced our intention to fix the OHIP+ program by focusing on drug benefits for those who do not already have prescription drug benefits. Children and youth who are not covered by private benefits would continue to receive their eligible prescriptions free. Mr. Speaker, I repeat: Children and youth who are not covered by private benefits would continue to receive their prescription drug benefits free.

The new system will be more efficient. The new system will save taxpayers money. And the new system will dedicate precious resources to those who need them the most. Most importantly, this ensures that children and youth who still need the prescription drugs will get them when they—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Back to the Minister of Health: Thank you for those kind words. I am proud that the people of Brampton South put their trust in me. I will not let them down.

And thank you very much for the important update. I am glad to see that the government for the people is getting to work saving taxpayers money without compromising the services that families and children depend on. It's great to hear that children and youth will continue to receive the prescription drugs they need.

Could the Minister of Health update the members of this House on how they are working with insurance companies to make these changes and save taxpayers money?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Since insurance plans can cover thousands more drugs than the 4,400 covered on OHIP+, children and youth would have more access to medications than under the current program.

Private insurers had previously given the government a grace period for some medication which was set to expire on July 1. That's why we needed to move quickly. We asked those insurance groups to extend that grace period, which they have kindly agreed to do. I am proud to say that the Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association welcomed these changes to OHIP+ and extended the transition period beyond July 1.

We are currently working with the insurance association to make sure that their transition period is seamless and that young people who need the drugs will be able to get them free of charge.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: My question is to the Premier. Why did the government drop reconciliation from the mandate of the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs, and what is behind the decision to have the minister share his time between northern affairs, mining, energy and Indigenous affairs?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Indigenous Affairs.

Hon. Greg Rickford: Meegwetch to the member. I congratulate him on winning a region of northwestern Ontario that's near and dear to my heart, as I served it in my former capacity as the member of Parliament for the great Kenora riding. I've spent several years there working as a nurse and a lawyer in those communities.

Mr. Speaker, we ran a campaign that reflected the needs of all Ontarians. We appreciate that truth and reconciliation represents a dark chapter in Canada's history. Moving forward, we as a government intend to honour the principles of truth and reconciliation, but to focus on the things that Indigenous communities are asking for: a piece of the prosperity that all Ontarians have come to expect in their communities.

Moving forward, whether it's resource revenue sharing for municipalities in Indigenous communities in this province, particularly in northern Ontario—we're going to make sure those Indigenous communities have access to the kind of prosperity that we all expect from government.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Speaker, First Nations are concerned about the government's step backward away from reconciliation. Nishnawbe Aski Nation Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler said, "It is difficult to see how progress can continue to be made when First Nations are reduced to only how they relate to the government's ability to access the resources within our lands."

During the campaign, the Premier famously said that he would get on a bulldozer himself to get the Ring of Fire under way. He also said that he would stop talking and start doing. But from the perspective of First Nations, the only way you can start doing anything in our territories is to start talking to our territories. Speaker, how does the Premier propose to do this with a part-time minister?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I can assure the member opposite that there's nothing part-time about the devotion and the skill that I bring to this portfolio. This ministry stands alone with a minister who spent more than eight years of his life living and working in Indigenous communities, mostly in northwestern Ontario but in fact across Canada. I have a keen sense and great relationships with Indigenous leaders. Some of these folks are some of my closest friends across the region.

We are going to ensure that First Nations have prosperity. The member mentioned the Ring of Fire. Those communities are doing more than just talking; they're working with the private sector, creating economic opportunities and creating jobs for those isolated and remote communities. It's high time, and we're going to deliver on those promises for prosperity for Indigenous communities.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members please take their seats.

I recognize the member for Ottawa South.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Congratulations on your election. My question is for the Premier.

Premier, congratulations on your election and your government's mandate, and congratulations to all the members of this Legislature on your election. Our caucus looks forward to working with all of you in the best interests of Ontario families.

Premier, during the campaign, we heard nothing about a plan from the Conservative Party for climate change. Do you believe that it's important for your government to have a plan for climate change? Yes or no?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Rod Phillips: Thank you to the member for the question. Our priority of course is to return our economy to the vibrancy that it once had. But we absolutely understand that climate change is real and we understand that man has played a role in that, so we will be bringing forward a plan to make sure that the Ontario economy is vibrant and strong, but also understands our own impact as human beings on climate. That plan will not include a regressive carbon tax.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you for your response. Premier, if the environment and climate change were important to you, it would have been in your throne speech. Climate change is the challenge of our generation. It's what we need to do for our kids, our grandkids and our great-grandkids.

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It is possible for a Conservative to have a plan for an environmental challenge. In the 1980s, there was one Conservative Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney, and he teamed with another Conservative you may know, Ronald Reagan, on their environmental challenge of the

time, acid rain. They worked together. They understood. They had a plan.

Premier, I want to ask you: What is your plan for climate change? You can't just tear something down and not put something in its place. There is not an option not to do anything. Premier, what is your plan?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, through you, we appreciate the member's confidence in previous Conservative administrations. This government will bring forward a plan that understands the importance of climate change, but we will do so in a way that preserves the economic growth that is required, that understands that a regressive tax on individuals—that telling people that they can't drive their cars anymore is not an effective or sincere way to approach this issue. But a plan will be coming.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Amanda Simard: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. First of all, I'd like to congratulate the honourable member on his re-election and his new role. I know that he'll do a fantastic job in putting our economy and businesses first and ensuring that good jobs are created all across our province.

Minister, we know that there are jobs across Ontario that depend on trade and our American friends and neighbours. From steelworkers in Hamilton and Sault Ste. Marie to our world-class auto sector, so many industries and so many of our communities depend on trade with our American partners.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please tell us some of the steps he is taking to protect those jobs and to stand shoulder to shoulder with hard-working Ontarians all across this province?

Hon. Jim Wilson: First of all, congratulations, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations to the honourable member, and thank you for the question. I know you'll do a great job for the people of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario is open for business once again. Premier Ford, in one of his first acts as Premier-elect, indicated that we will stand shoulder to shoulder with our federal cousins—on the trade issue; I'd better clarify that for a minute. One of the first things that he did and that I did was to get briefed by the federal government and the Canadian ambassador on the NAFTA negotiations.

One in five jobs in Ontario, or 1.3 million jobs in Ontario, depend on good relations with the United States and our trade relations. In the United States—we want to go down there this week and make it clear that nine million jobs depend on good NAFTA negotiations with the United States, and that's what I'll be doing at the end of the week.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Ms. Amanda Simard: Mr. Speaker, back to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

Minister, over the past 15 years, Ontario's economy has struggled under the weight of punishing red tape,

skyrocketing hydro rates and unfair taxes that have put our province at a competitive disadvantage. Under the last government, there was a steady flow of both jobs and investment out of our province. Minister, I'm sure that you and your ministry have been hard at work taking early steps to not only keep good jobs in Ontario, but to attract more investment and job creation.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please explain how his government for the people is ensuring that Ontario is once again open for business?

Hon. Jim Wilson: As I said, Mr. Speaker, at the end of this week I'll be heading to the United States to appear before a commerce committee. It's unprecedented that Ontario as a subnational government has this opportunity, and we're going to make it clear that we're open for business.

The way that we're open for business is to keep that border open between the United States and Ontario and Canada. Eighty-five per cent of our cars, for example, go to the United States. An auto part, for example, could go across the NAFTA region borders seven times before it's finally put into a car either on the US side or the Canadian side.

If we don't get this trade relationship right, some 900,000 cars might not be made in the next three years in Ontario; right now, we make two million a year. That will be thousands and thousands of families who can't put food on the table. So we're counting on good relations with the US. Premier Ford has already set that in motion. He's working with the governors. We're going to open those borders to good jobs.

REFUGEES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Oshawa.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations. It's nice to see you in the chair.

My question is for the Premier. Collapsing the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration into an afterthought in the middle of a global refugee crisis is wrong. Although the ministry has been erased, the issues have not. Ignoring the fact that most asylum seekers and newcomers are not breaking any laws, this government has continued to use divisive and inflammatory language. Calling those who seek refuge or asylum "illegals" is appalling, and it doesn't absolve this government of responsibility.

This government's rash decision to cut provincial refugee resettlement services forces our cities to shoulder the costs of housing and leads to greater costs down the road. Neglecting this humanitarian crisis is not in line with Ontario's values, and it puts the \$11 million from the federal government in question. Conflicting reports leave many wondering who this government is working for and what the plan is.

Let me ask the Premier clearly: Who are you working for? And are you walking away from \$11 million?

Hon. Doug Ford: To the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much for the question, and welcome back to the House. As well to you, Speaker: It's great to see you in that chair.

I would also like to thank the people of Nepean for once again, for a fifth time, sending me to this Legislature. It is the most diverse riding inside the city of Ottawa, where people from all around the world come to live, raise a family and retire.

I'm also proud to be an Ontarian and I'm proud to be a Canadian. I'm proud to be a member of the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, where we, for the first time, elected two Tamil MPPs, Logan Kanapathi and Vijay Thanigasalam. We elected the first Korean MPP in Raymond Cho; the first Coptic Egyptian Canadian MPP, Sheref Sabawy; two Persian Canadian MPPs, Goldie Ghamari and Michael Parsa, and many, many more.

I'll talk about the broken immigration system of the Liberal Party of Canada in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Please take your seats.

Supplementary.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Again to the Premier: Report after report shows that across Ontario, there is a growing and long-standing housing crisis. Instead of fixing the crisis, this government has chosen to fear-monger and place the blame on people seeking asylum. But let me be clear to this Premier: The Premier is making things worse.

Speaker, just days before being elected, Mr. Ford had a backroom conversation with Mayor Tory and Councillor John Campbell, urging them to stop the city from building a temporary homeless shelter two kilometres from his house. This homeless shelter could have provided much-needed temporary housing aid for asylum seekers.

Does this Premier think it's appropriate for the Premier of Ontario to intervene in municipal plans for personal gain?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: We've been perfectly clear that the federal government has an obligation to pay for its failed federal policies. This is a situation where we have 800 people in college dormitories who, on August 9, need to be vacated so students can go back into those locations. I ask the member opposite: Where does she think they should go?

We have a \$175-million crisis in order to pay for Toronto housing costs, which are \$75 million; Ottawa's shelter costs, which are \$11 million; and in my own department, \$90 million on the welfare roll.

We're going to continue to welcome people to Ontario, and we're going to continue to support them. We've brought in 36,000 refugees in the last two years alone, outside of the Syrian refugee crisis, but somebody's going to have to pay for all of that, and it's going

to be the federal government. We'd love your support in the Ontario PC Party to talk to the federal Liberals—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Please take your seats.

Next question.

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HYDRO RATES

Ms. Lindsey Park: My question is for the Minister of Energy. I congratulate the member from Kenora–Rainy River on his appointment in this important role. I know he will make the people of the great riding of Kenora–Rainy River proud.

The legacy of the previous government was the mess they made in the hydro system. Ontario was home to some of the highest hydro rates in North America.

When I went door to door in Durham during the election campaign, I heard from families who had to choose between putting food on the table and paying their hydro bills. Families should not be forced to choose between heating and eating. I heard from small businesses who were forced to close their doors and shutter their windows because of skyrocketing rates. Meanwhile, insiders and friends of the previous government got rich and lined their pockets.

This is a mess that started with the Green Energy Act passed by both the Liberals and the NDP, and this is a mess that needs to be cleaned up. Could the Minister of Energy please tell me what the government for the people has done and—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you, Minister of Energy?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to congratulate the member from Durham on her outstanding victory and the representation she will bring to her constituents.

There is no question, Mr. Speaker, that the previous government made it their mission to expand renewable energy at unsustainable rates and unaffordable contracts, industrial wind turbines and solar power that constituents and communities found unfavourable for them. We're cancelling them because—imagine this, Mr. Speaker; this will be a new kind of concept for the NDP, and certainly unknown to the other one. We're going to protect the interests of Ontario taxpayers, Ontario people, that shareholder called the Ontario ratepayer who owns 47.5% of Hydro One.

So, over the past couple of weeks, we've had a lot of excitement and activity. We're going to reduce those hydro rates.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Ms. Lindsey Park: Back to the minister: Thank you very much for that update. I'm glad to see the government for the people is moving swiftly to clean up the hydro mess. This is yet another promise made and yet another promise kept.

But cleaning up the hydro mess will not be easy. Nowhere is this more evident than at Hydro One. After 15 years of Liberal scandals, waste and mismanagement, the people of Ontario have lost trust in Hydro One. I heard it every single day when I went door to door in Durham.

The government for the people will need to move swiftly and act fast. Could the Minister of Energy please provide the members of this House with an update on what is being done to restore public confidence in Hydro One?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Thanks to the tremendous leadership shown by Premier Ford, we took an opportunity to renew the leadership of Hydro One, and we're taking important steps in the coming weeks and months to ensure that the Ontario ratepayer and the Ontario taxpayer, colleagues, is going to be protected. This, including a couple of other important steps with my colleagues here today, is going to ensure that hydro rates come down.

The renewal of the leadership at Hydro One is going to represent a cost savings, but that's not enough for us, Mr. Speaker. We want to cancel contracts that put an unfair burden on ratepayers here in Ontario and ensure that, moving forward, we're not subsidizing and punting that debt down the road to our families. We're cutting it now so families have real savings on their hydro bills.

CURRICULUM

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. This government's dangerous decision to repeal the updated sexual health curriculum is dragging Ontario backwards. It is a harmful decision that puts children and youth at risk.

The people of Ontario understand that this was a back-room decision to appease a small circle of socially conservative insiders at the expense of our children's safety. Will the Premier admit that repealing the sex-ed curriculum was about advancing his own political career without any regard for the health, safety and well-being of young people in this province?

Hon. Doug Ford: To the Minister of Education.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Education.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you, Speaker, and again, it's great to see you in that chair. As I stand for the first time in the 42nd Parliament, I want to thank the residents and the voters of Huron–Bruce. I've worked very, very hard over the last seven years and that's not going to change.

In that spirit, Speaker, I would like to share with you today that, contrary to what was reported last week, we are going to stand firmly in support of students and the realities they face in 2018. We know they need to learn about consent. We know they need to learn about cyber safety. We know they need to learn about gender identity and appreciation. But we also know that the former Liberal government's consultation process was completely

flawed, and that's where we're going to focus, and we're going to respect parents and allow them a chance to once and for all have their voices heard in a very fulsome, thoughtful, inclusive consultation.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members, please take your seats.

The member for London West, supplementary.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: The repeal of the 2015 curriculum requires schools to teach an outdated sex-ed curriculum from 1998, a curriculum written before same-sex marriage was legal, before texting and Google and social media. It denies the existence of LGBTQ youth and families and the reality of our modern, diverse society. It does nothing to provide young people with the accurate, up-to-date information they need to protect themselves about cyberbullying, about sexting, about healthy relationships, and most of all about consent.

Why does the government want to take away the critical information and tools young people need to keep themselves safe?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Please take your seats.

Minister?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: As I said before, contrary to all the spinning and what was reported last week, we—the Premier, myself and all our colleagues in the PC government—stand with students and the fact that they need to be prepared for 2018 realities. That includes consent. That includes texting, sexting. That includes even new elements like luring and catfishing.

We need to take a look at that and open up a consultation to make sure that every person who wants to share their perspective has an opportunity to do so. I am committed to a consultation that will absolutely ring true across this province and stamp out any misconceptions that this opposition party is trying to perpetuate, and we'll improve upon what the Liberal curriculum has done in the past.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Please take your seats.

Next question?

PICKERING NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr. Lorne Coe: My question is to the Minister of Energy. I'd like to congratulate the honourable member on his being named the minister and the excellent work he is doing to make life more affordable for everyone in Ontario.

Speaker, the Pickering nuclear generating station is vital to Durham region. Some 4,500 jobs in the region depend on the continued operation of this plant. An additional 3,000 jobs across the province also depend on the

continued operation of the plant. That's 7,500 good-paying jobs across the province. However, throughout the election campaign, the future of this plant was under constant threat. Radical special interests in downtown Toronto and opposition parties tried to shut this plant down in August and put 4,500 Durham region families out of work.

Speaker, could the Minister of Energy please tell the members of this House what action this government is taking to protect 4,500 jobs in Durham region?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to congratulate the member from Whitby on his re-election. I appreciate his contributions and long-standing service to this place.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud that Premier Ford was able to join the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, the President of the Treasury Board, the member from Whitby and the member from Durham to stand up—now here's another concept the opposition is going to have to get used to: promise made, promise delivered.

Premier Ford stood proudly with those workers who were concerned about what they could do to provide for their families moving forward if this facility was shut down by an NDP government. Imagine that, Mr. Speaker. We're going to move forward on an effective plan that offers safe and efficient delivery of hydro energy. That's the promise we made and that's what we're going to do.

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The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Back to the Minister of Energy: Thank you very much, Minister, for this great news for the people of Whitby and Durham regions. Keeping the Pickering nuclear generating station open not only protects thousands of good-paying jobs across the province, it's also great news for Ontario ratepayers, families, small businesses and Ontario job creators who will save hundreds of millions of dollars on their hydro bills.

Unfortunately, radical special interests in downtown Toronto and opposition parties in this House wanted to shut this plant down and jack hydro bills up, making life harder and more unaffordable.

Could the minister please tell the members of this House how much the government for the people expects keeping the Pickering nuclear generating station open will save Ontario hydro ratepayers?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I appreciate the member speaking up for another important principle that will guide this government's decision-making, making responsible decisions that save taxpayers money. Imagine that, Mr. Speaker.

Premier Ford's government's commitment to govern for the people and keep the Pickering generating station open until 2024 will in fact save Ontario ratepayers \$600 million. It will ensure that 60% of our electricity that comes from nuclear power will include this important asset. As importantly, Mr. Speaker, it will ensure that 60,000 people in Ontario will have work in nuclear power. Now, this represents a wide range of skill-set people that we want working in our province. What does the NDP want to do? They want to shut it down. We'll take no lessons from that party when it comes to—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Please take your seats. Please take your seats.

I recognize the member for Nickel Belt.

PHARMACARE

M^{me} France G elinas: Merci, monsieur le Pr esident, et toutes mes f elicitations. Ma question est pour le premier ministre. The Premier's decision to privatize OHIP+ will not fix the gap in drug coverage. It will not help the millions of people who can't afford their prescriptions and it will not lower the cost of prescription drugs. Instead, it is a huge step backwards from the universal public pharmacare program that families need.

How can the Premier defend his decision to privatize pharmacare when it will leave the people of Ontario with higher drug costs and lower drug coverage?

Hon. Doug Ford: The Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the member for the question. That is not what's happening. What we're trying to do is use the very limited resources that we have in Ontario right now for the people who actually need it, for the people who don't already have prescription drug benefits. That's what we need to do. That's what we're working with the insurers to do and that's what the people of Ontario want.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

M^{me} France G elinas: The minister seems to be ignoring the facts. The decision to privatize pharmacare is not fiscally responsible. Economists and health care leaders all say privatizing pharmacare is the absolute wrong thing to do. In fact, the leading economist on pharmaceutical costs in Canada, Dr. Steven Morgan, says the Premier's drug plan costs will hit the middle class the hardest. He says this cut "benefits narrow interest at the expense of the majority of Ontario businesses and households."

My question to the minister is simple: Which back-room insiders and lobbyists are telling the Premier to privatize pharmacare, and why is the Premier listening to them?

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, what is happening is a common-sense solution, and what we're doing is reversing a decision that was made by the previous government that made no sense to anybody at all. What we want to do is go back to the system that existed before where there is access to more drugs than currently exist so that people can get access to those prescriptions. Right now, there are situations under the previous OHIP+, which we're changing, where people couldn't get access to the medications they needed because the formulary was so old.

We need to move forward. We need to make sure that the insurers continue to cover as a first line so that the money will be available for the people who need it who do not have prescription drug coverage—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Please take your seats.

Next question.

FIREFIGHTING IN NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. Ross Romano: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Firstly, I want to congratulate the honourable member on his re-election and on the important role he has taken in our new government.

Last week, many residents of Temagami faced the scare of their life when a mandatory evacuation order was placed on them due to the intensity of active wildfires in the region. At the height of the blaze, over 70 fires were burning and over 600 brave firefighters were putting their lives on the line to bring these fires under control.

Can the minister please tell the House what steps his ministry has taken to ensure support for first responders and the safety of the local residents?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I would like to thank the member from Sault Ste. Marie for that question. Welcome back to our caucus. I look forward to continuing to work with you as we go forward.

I would first of all like to thank all the firefighters and their families from across the province and across this country who have answered the call to help those in Temagami. Our wildland fire and emergency response personnel are working closely with the Ontario Provincial Police, local authorities and agencies to fight the fire near the town of Temagami and to make sure that people are moved to safety.

People in communities threatened by this fire are responding in a calm and orderly way. I want to thank them for supporting their neighbours and co-operating with local officials during this emergency. Their continued co-operation with emergency personnel will help keep people safe in areas affected by the wildfires.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Ross Romano: Back to the minister: Thank you, Minister, for your answer.

The intensity of these fires has required a tremendous amount of effort from first responders all across Ontario. I understand, in fact, that we have asked for and received support from other provinces as well. It takes incredible coordination of efforts between first responders, fire rangers, support staff and teams from other provinces to respond in such a timely fashion to help execute an evacuation in this period of time without injury.

Can the minister please provide this House with more details on the responses and the actions taken to battle these fires in order to keep the residents of Temagami safe?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thank you again for that question.

Yes, we have requested and received support from provinces from across the country. On behalf of Premier Ford and the Ontario government, we want to thank those

Premiers from these provinces for helping Ontario in our time of need by sending aircraft and fire rangers to help fight these fires and a significant number of other active fires throughout the province.

I also want to thank the tremendous efforts of our fire rangers and support staff who have been working tirelessly to protect this community. For the sons, daughters and partners of these first responders, I want to give them my full promise that we will do everything and give them full support in battling these fires in Temagami and across northern Ontario to ensure their safety. I want to give a personal thanks to each and every one of them.

I would also like to assure the House that our government is continuing to monitor the situation closely and we will continue to provide updates on a timely basis.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Ms. Catherine Fife: I have a tough but fair question for the Premier.

One of the first actions your government took was a hiring and wage freeze on the broader public sector. What you don't seem to understand is when you freeze the public sector and prevent people from working for the people of this province, you shut out the public services for those people.

The hiring freeze was followed by a firing of a string of high-profile senior bureaucrats: Ontario's first chief scientist—we don't know what the Premier has against facts—and Ontario's trade representative in Washington, DC. The list goes on. Already we see a pattern with your new government: Get rid of anyone who might be critical of your agenda.

Did the Premier impose a hiring freeze and fire senior civil servants so that you could replace them with your own bureaucrats who will toe the Conservative Party line?

Hon. Doug Ford: President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question, and the member opposite. I also would like to thank my family, who supported me in my election, and the great people of the riding of Pickering-Uxbridge.

Our government is committed to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of government, spending in all sectors and bringing a balanced budget to the people, for the people. A public service hiring freeze is the first step towards a balanced budget and bringing real change to the province of Ontario. To that end, one of our first acts has been to direct all ministries to implement a hiring freeze until we can get a true look at the picture of the state of Ontario's finances.

Mr. Speaker, let me be clear: The hiring freeze does not apply to our front-line workers like nurses and teachers. The freeze will be implemented in a manner that ensures the government remains able to deliver the high-quality public services that the people of Ontario depend on.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have for oral questions today.

I'd like to remind all members that when you're speaking in the House, when you have the floor of the House, when you've been recognized by the Speaker, you address your comments through the Speaker, and if you're speaking of other members, you speak about them respectfully and you speak about them in the third person.

VISITOR

Mr. Bill Walker: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to introduce Ferg Devins, chair of Bladder Cancer Canada, and a survivor, and a proud resident of Kenora and northern Ontario, who is in the members' gallery.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Education on a point of order.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I would like to share an appreciation to all of our pages. Welcome back and thank you for helping us out during this summer session. It's great to see you back.

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I, too, would like to express my thanks to the staff of the Ontario Legislature for all of the work that they've done to prepare for this special summer sitting of the House. They've worked very, very hard and they deserve our appreciation: the table staff, as well as all of the staff who work for the Legislature. Thank you very much.

There being no deferred votes, this House is in recess until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1152 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Jane McKenna: They're not here yet, but my oldest daughter, Jennifer Dufour, my two grandchildren, who have never been here before, Charlie and Georgia, and my other daughter, Taylor McKenna, are going to be here shortly. I welcome them, and I'm so excited that they are coming today.

TABLING OF SESSIONAL PAPERS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that during the interval between the 41st and 42nd Parliaments, the following reports from parliamentary officers were tabled:

—the report concerning the review of expense claims under the Cabinet Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' Expenses Review and Accountability Act, 2002, for submissions received in March 2018 and complete as of

May 9, 2018, from the Office of the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario; and

—the report of the review of expense claims covering the period April 1, 2017, to March 31, 2018, pursuant to the Cabinet Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' Expenses Review and Accountability Act, 2002, from the Office of the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario; and

—the 2017 annual report and statistical report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario; and

—the 2017-18 annual report of the Office of the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario; and

—the 2017-18 annual report of the Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CURRICULUM

Ms. Catherine Fife: I wish to acknowledge the lands that we have the privilege of working on. For thousands of years, Queen's Park has been on the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca and the Mississaugas of the Credit River. My community of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand tract, on lands that are deeply connected to Indigenous peoples who have historically lived and who currently live in this territory. These groups include the Neutral, Anishnawbe and Haudenosaunee peoples.

Land acknowledgements are a step towards reconciliation, but they need to be accompanied by meaningful change and action. That's why I and so many others in Waterloo were dismayed to see the cancellation of Truth and Reconciliation Commission curriculum-writing sessions. It is essential to acknowledge the ways that our education system has oppressed and colonized Indigenous peoples and to move forward with them to change the narrative, to centre Indigenous knowledge and history in our classrooms across this province.

There are so many reasons to do this. According to Professor Jeffrey Ansloos, Indigenous education "deepens our collective responsibility, our social awareness of one another, and our histories." It "lifts the whole community up."

The new government needs to recognize how we can all relate to people in a more just and understanding way. Our education system needs to be a safe and welcoming place for Indigenous students. We have a constitutional responsibility to ensure that the curriculum reflects the truth.

If we get this right, we will see better outcomes for Indigenous students, which benefits everyone. Don't let the people of this province down.

CHAI LIFELINE CANADA

Mrs. Gila Martow: When a child is born or diagnosed with a serious illness, the entire family is affected. Chai Lifeline Canada steps in, offering whatever is

needed: counselling for each member of the family; volunteers who bring an extra measure of adult attention and stability to the children's lives. They provide tutoring; they have summer camps. All of this is free of charge.

"Chai" in Hebrew means "life."

They can be found at chailifelinecanada.org on the Internet.

There's an event next Monday, July 23, at Graydon Hall Manor. I'll be there. I hope a lot of people will be there from inside the Legislature and from without. Chai on Tap is a gala, and it will be educational and entertaining. There's going to be Roger Mittag from Thirst for Knowledge talking about beers. There is going to be lots of great food from PR Creative Catering. We're going to get educated on the history, the different styles of beers, different beer terminology and, of course, the health benefits of beer. There are going to be lagers, stouts, fruit beer and ale, as well as non-malt-based drinks.

I'm sure there will be something for everyone: good food, good beer, good friends.

L'chaim to everybody here.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members' statements? The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker. Again, congratulations on your election as Speaker.

I want to share the story of Cari Thompson from my riding of Nickel Belt. Mrs. Thompson has a health problem that may require surgery. She was referred to an ear, nose and throat specialist. After waiting about three months, she contacted the specialist's office to ask when she could expect to be seen. She was told the wait-list to see the doctor in Sudbury is three years, and if she needs surgery, she could expect to wait another one to two years.

My constituent has been sentenced to five years of pain because she lives in northern Ontario. The same specialty is available within weeks in southern Ontario. This is not fair. Why do we, as northerners, have to choose between timely care in southern Ontario or year-long wait-lists at home? This needs to change.

Health Quality Ontario's recent report, Northern Ontario Health Equity Strategy: A Plan for Achieving Health Equity in the North, by the North, for the North, co-chaired by our excellent chief medical officer, Dr. Penny Sutcliffe, lays out the path for change that is needed so northerners will have equitable access to high-quality care regardless of where they live, what they have or who they are.

I sure hope in the line-by-line audit of the health care budget, the government uses a northern equity lens. Northerners deserve equity of access to our health care system, not long wait-lists.

AHMADIYYA MUSLIM COMMUNITY

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I rise with a deep sense of gratitude to my constituents as I speak today for the first

time in this chamber. The values that bind this country—freedom, tolerance, human rights, the rule of law—are the values that unite our country and the values that drive the spirit of Canada's Ahmadiyya Muslim community. I am proud that this patriotic community is nationally headquartered in my riding, in Peace Village in the riding of King–Vaughan.

Just last week, a show of force of Progressive Conservative MPPs attended Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Canada's Jalsa Salana conference, the largest Islamic convention in Canada, with over 20,000 people attending.

We, the team present, thank this enterprising and vibrant community for reflecting the very best of Canada's pluralism. Their motto, "Love for All, Hatred for None," only underscores the moral duty they possess to oppose all forms of hate and extremism and to embrace our shared citizenship.

Most disturbingly, this community faces systematic persecution around the world: indiscriminate attacks on freedom of religion and freedom of conscience.

Here in Canada, we stand with them in the defence of human rights, and we thank them for their acts of generosity and compassion—generosity demonstrated through the life-saving work of Humanity First, here at home and around the world, and the food bank in Vaughan that serves thousands of families in need.

I congratulate the Ahmadiyya community for a successful Jalsa Salana. Thank you for putting humanity first and for your service to community and country.

NORTHERN TRANSPORTATION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members' statements? The member for Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Speaker, and congratulations on being elected to the chair.

Here I am, once again standing up on behalf of the good people of Algoma–Manitoulin and asking why we have to lose these services in northern Ontario. Once again, another service, a bus service, is being lost. Greyhound is pulling out of northern Ontario. All the routes west from Sudbury going on to other provinces are going to be losing these services. These individuals who are going to be affected are the most affected individuals, such as seniors, people in poverty, individuals and students who are looking for ways of getting to and from their educational facilities.

This can't happen. We have to have a government that is going to step up and actually come up with a plan. So I ask this government: What is your plan? You permitted the Northlander to be cancelled. You didn't do very much when the train was cancelled. You didn't do very much either when other services were removed from northern Ontario.

The ONTC has stepped up. I'm looking forward to working with the ONTC and making sure that maybe this is an opportunity for them to find additional ways and means they can bring those services to northern Ontario. But this is where a government needs to step up.

1310

I'm going to be putting questions to this government in the very near future in regard to what your plan is, because right now, northern Ontario once again is losing another service.

CURRICULUM

Mr. John Fraser: Last week, the government repealed Ontario's updated sexual education curriculum—a curriculum that has been taught for three years. It was the most consulted curriculum in the history of Ontario—4,000 parents, 700 students and 2,400 teachers. It's a curriculum that protects our kids. It teaches them how to say no. It teaches kids about our differences and respecting those differences, both visible and invisible. It teaches our kids about the dangers of the Internet, cyberbullying and social media. It teaches our kids about healthy relationships. It's a curriculum that reflects the risks in our world today.

Cancelling the new curriculum and replacing it with one from 1998 is simply irresponsible. It fails to protect our kids—all of our kids.

Glen Canning, the father of Rehtaeh Parsons, who tragically took her own life, said, "What happened to my daughter was preventable ... it was preventable with a good sex education program."

There are countless stories of kids who have suffered that we haven't heard, and they are suffering now. So I'm asking the government to reverse its decision and reinstate the curriculum in time for the school year.

STRATFORD PERTH ROTARY HOSPICE

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: June 21 was a great day for Stratford and Perth county. I was honoured to attend the official groundbreaking ceremony for the Stratford Perth Rotary Hospice. Opening in March 2019, this new eight-bed facility will provide expert and compassionate care to people nearing the end of life.

The whole community came together to raise \$6.5 million of the \$8.5-million capital budget. The city of Stratford committed an impressive \$1.5 million. Stratford Rotary Club members and president Dr. Linda Bathe have been working hard to reach their goal of \$1 million. The provincial government is also contributing \$1.6 million in capital for eight new hospice beds and \$840,000 in annual operating funding for nursing care.

I've been a proud supporter of this hospice since day one. I supported it in the last two election campaigns. I supported it in my first meeting with Andy Werner and Anne Fontana. They found partners across our area. They secured the approvals and funding they needed. Without their leadership and everyone in the Stratford Perth Hospice Foundation, this project would not have been possible.

At some point, all of us will have a loved one in need of end-of-life care. Many of us will need such care in our lives.

A hospice is not about dying, but helping people live as well as possible through the last days of their lives.

FIREFIGHTING IN NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. John Vanthof: I would like to take this first opportunity I have to speak in the House since the election to update the members regarding the wildfire situation in the riding of Timiskaming–Cochrane. We always hear about Temagami in the news reports; it actually affects Temagami, Marten River, River Valley and communities such as Elk Lake.

I just got a call from a resident of mine, Gerry Frost, who is in Temagami. He was just outside of the evacuation area and he asked me if I could make special mention of the water bombers, because the water bombers went over his house for five hours straight. He said, “I’ve seen movies of the Battle of Britain, and it felt like the Battle of Britain.” I’d like to make a special thank you to the water bombers.

We knew it was going to be bad, Speaker. Two Sundays ago, I woke up, it was 5 o’clock in the morning, and the wind was blowing already. It was 26 degrees. We knew it was going to be bad. I’m about half an hour away from Temagami, and by 1 o’clock, we couldn’t see the sun. It’s an experience that—you have to be there to believe it.

I’d like to thank the other jurisdictions: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, Northwest Territories and the state of Minnesota. I was talking to the Minister of Natural Resources this morning, and he said that we’re going to get some international help as well.

People in the north—we know about fires. In 1916 and in 1922, lives were lost. It’s the facilities we have now, the help from other communities and our own MNR that prevent that from happening now. Thank you very much, on all our behalf.

TINY TOWNSHIP CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT

Ms. Jill Dunlop: I would like to express my sincerest appreciation and gratitude to the constituents of Simcoe North for selecting me to be their new voice at Queen’s Park. I also want to thank my family and friends for their constant love and support throughout the election campaign.

This past weekend, I had the opportunity to attend the township of Tiny mayor’s charity golf tournament in my home riding of Simcoe North. The tournament included 130 golfers and 60 dinner guests, and was attended by local residents and politicians from all levels of government. I had the pleasure of spending the day with Dave Hobson, a southern Georgian Bay OPP officer, Neil Monague from Beausoleil First Nation and Ryan Walsh, a local correctional officer.

The primary goal of the tournament was to raise over \$60,000 to support 15 local charity organizations. I am proud to announce that the tournament’s fundraising surpassed this number, and raised approximately \$65,000.

I would like to personally acknowledge and thank the golfers and dinner guests for attending the tournament, the local sponsors for making this event possible through their incredible generosity, and the Brooklea Golf and Country Club for their outstanding hospitality.

I would also like to congratulate Mayor George Cornell and the members of Tiny township council for their exceptional commitment to charity, community solidarity and public service. Fundraising events like this tournament are an important way of ensuring that local charitable organizations have the necessary resources and tools to fulfill their vision through supporting local residents.

FIREFIGHTING IN NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I also want to echo what was said by my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane. As we know, the fire season is hard upon us now—lately just into the city of Timmins, just the other side of Shillington. I just want to echo—because I know that the mayor, Mr. Black, our council and the community are four-square behind the Ministry of Natural Resources and the work that they’ve been doing.

All of those people who are working on firefighting are really extraordinary people, putting their lives on the line in order to make sure that we can save property, and, more importantly, that we can make lives safe when it comes to those areas. So we take this time in the House, appropriately so, in order to say to all of those men and women, who are out there every day trying to fight those fires and keep them under control, a great big thank you.

I want to hearken back to the Timmins 9 fire that we had a while back, I guess about three or four years ago. As I was at the fire centre and watching them, how they controlled it, we had huge winds of about 30 to 40 knots that were blowing towards built-up areas. It was amazing to watch the technology that Ontario has developed in order to be able to control fires and to steer the fires away from built-up areas. Where we could have been in a situation to lose a whole bunch of cottages, buildings and the campground, the Ministry of Natural Resources essentially steered the fire away from where the fire wanted to go by doing certain things—controlled burns, putting up berms and different things—so that the fire was able to go into another area that had no buildings.

So a great big thank you to all those people fighting forest fires.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

URGENT PRIORITIES ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 PORTANT SUR LES PRIORITÉS URGENTES

Mr. Rickford moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act respecting Hydro One Limited, the termination of the White Pines Wind Project and the labour disputes between York University and Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 3903 / Projet de loi 2, Loi concernant Hydro One Limited, l'annulation du projet de parc éolien White Pines et les conflits de travail entre l'Université York et la section locale 3903 du Syndicat canadien de la fonction publique.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

First reading agreed to.

1320

Hon. Greg Rickford: Today I rise to introduce, on behalf of the government, the Urgent Priorities Act, 2018, and move that leave be given to introduce the bill and that it be read for the first time. Because this act connects or amends various other acts, I'll speak to these in order.

We made a commitment to lower electricity bills for the people of Ontario, and included a commitment to address renewed governance at Hydro One. This is why our government has prepared legislation that, if passed, will improve transparency and accountability at Hydro One.

The second aspect of this act is the White Pines Wind Project Termination Act. My ministry has prepared legislation to terminate the contract and any related regulatory approvals and permits for the White Pines wind project, retroactive to July 10, 2018.

The third and final aspect of this legislation is the Back to Class Act (York University), 2018. If passed, it would mean an end to the ongoing work stoppage at York University immediately after royal assent.

PETITIONS

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I'm proud to rise for the first time in this House, on behalf of the people of Parkdale-High Park, to table a petition on truth and reconciliation, an issue that is very important to my constituents. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario is situated on the traditional territory of Indigenous peoples, many who have been on this land for at least 12,000 years;

"Whereas in 2015 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada released its final report: 'Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future' which made 94 recommendations or 'Calls to Action' for the government of Canada;

"Whereas reconciliation must be at the centre of all government decision-making;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to act to:

"—continue the reconciliation work in Ontario by implementing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission;

"—reinstate the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation;

"—work with First Nations leaders to sign co-operative government-to-government accords;

"—support TRC education and community development (e.g. TRC summer writing sessions);

"—support Indigenous communities across the province (e.g. cleaning up Grassy Narrows)."

CURRICULUM

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario entitled "Protecting Children: Forward, Not Backward, on Sex Ed." It reads as follows:

"Whereas the health and physical education curriculum empowers young people to make informed decisions about relationships and their bodies;

"Whereas gender-based violence, gender inequality, unintended pregnancies, 'sexting,' and HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) pose serious risks to the safety and well-being of young people;

"Whereas one in three women and one in six men experience sexual violence in Canada, and a lack of age-appropriate education about sexual health and healthy relationships leaves children and youth vulnerable to exploitation;

"Whereas one in five parents reported that their own child was a victim of cyber-bullying;

"Whereas Doug Ford and the Conservative government is dragging Ontario backward, requiring students to learn an outdated sex ed curriculum that excludes information about consent, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexting, cyber-bullying and safe and healthy relationships;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of Education to continue the use of the 2015 health and physical education curriculum in schools and move Ontario forward, not backward."

I fully support this petition, affix my name to it and will give it to page Michael to take to the table.

ENERGY POLICIES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm glad to present this petition on behalf of my constituent Gilbert Benoit from Hanmer. It reads as follows:

"Whereas hydro bills in Ontario have become unaffordable for too many people, and that reducing hydro bills by up to 30% for families and businesses is an ambitious but realistic target; and

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

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

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

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

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

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

CURRICULUM

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas all students deserve access to comprehensive health and physical education;

“Whereas the current curriculum was created and written by experts in child development and Internet safety, police and social workers in consultation with approximately 4,000 parents;

“Whereas the current curriculum teaches students about a wide range of topics including healthy eating, personal safety and injury protection, substance abuse, addictions and related behaviours, human development and sexual health (‘sex-ed’), and consent;

“Whereas the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 2018 study on sexuality education states that comprehensive health and physical education have positive effects, including ‘increasing young people’s knowledge and improving their attitudes related to sexual and reproductive health behaviours’;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to keep Ontario’s health and physical education curriculum (‘sex-ed’) in its current form.”

I fully endorse this petition and will be affixing my signature to it.

CURRICULUM

Ms. Catherine Fife: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the 2015 health and education curriculum empowers young people to make informed decisions about relationships and their bodies; and

“Whereas gender-based violence, gender inequality, unintended pregnancies, ‘sexting,’ HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) pose serious risks to the safety and well-being of young people; and

“Whereas one in three women and one in six men experience sexual violence in Canada and a lack of age-appropriate education about sexual health and healthy relationships leaves them vulnerable to sexual exploitation; and

“Whereas a 2018 Ipsos poll found that one third of Canadian parents know a child in their community who has been cyber-bullied and 20% of parents reported their own child being a victim of cyber-bullying; and

“Whereas the 1998 Progressive Conservative curriculum does not teach students about consent, social media and online safety, stereotypes, sexual orientation, LGBTQ+ families or gender identity;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of Education to continue the use of the Ontario 2015 health and physical education curriculum in Ontario.”

It’s my pleasure to affix my signature to this petition and give it to page Medha.

PRÉVENTION DU TABAGISME CHEZ LES JEUNES

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’aimerais remercier M^{me} Cheri Bainard de mon comté, à Hanmer, pour la pétition.

« Entendu que, au cours des 10 dernières années en Ontario, 86 % de tous les films montrant des fumeurs étaient accessibles aux jeunes et le fait que l’industrie du tabac se sert du grand écran pour promouvoir l’usage du tabac est bien documenté; et

« Entendu qu’un rapport scientifique rendu public par l’Unité de recherche sur le tabac de l’Ontario, environ 185 000 enfants de l’Ontario commenceront à fumer après avoir vu des personnages fumer dans des films, et que plus que 59 000 fumeurs ainsi recrutés finiront par mourir de maladies liées à l’usage du tabac, lesquelles entraîneront des coûts de soins de santé de l’ordre d’au moins 1,1 milliard de dollars; et

« Entendu que le gouvernement de l’Ontario s’est fixé comme objectif d’atteindre le taux de tabagisme le plus faible au Canada, et que 79 % ... des Ontariens et Ontariennes appuient l’interdiction de l’usage du tabac dans les films classés dans les catégories G, PG, 14A; et

« Entendu que » le ministère « des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs a le pouvoir de modifier, par l’entremise du Conseil des ministres, les règlements pris en application de la Loi sur le classement des films;

« Nous, soussignés » demandons à l’Assemblée législative :

« Que le gouvernement examine les façons dont on pourrait modifier la Loi sur le classement des films pour réduire l’usage du tabac dans les films classés dans les catégories qui conviennent aux enfants et aux adolescents, et diffusés en Ontario. »

J’appuie cette pétition et je vais demander à Michael de l’amener à la table des greffiers.

1330

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition, and I’d like to thank Mr. Al Legault from Val Caron in my riding. It reads as follows:

“Whereas a growing number of Ontarians are affected by the growth in low-wage, part-time, casual, temporary and insecure employment; and

“Whereas too many workers are unprotected by current minimum standards outlined in employment and labour laws; and

“Whereas the Ontario government” has changed the laws, but still;

We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“Implement a minimum wage of \$15 an hour.”

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

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from Elizabeth McGuire from my riding of Nickel Belt, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the \$100 ODSP Work-Related Benefit provides a critically important source of funds to people with disabilities on ODSP who work, giving them the ability to pay for much-needed ongoing work-related expenses, such as transportation, clothing, food, personal care and hygiene items, and child care; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Community and Social Services” eliminated “the Work-Related Benefit as part of a restructuring of OW and ODSP employment benefits and has said that ongoing work-related expenses will not be covered by” the new system;

“Whereas eliminating the Work-Related Benefit will take about \$36 million annually out of the pockets of people with disabilities on ODSP who work; and

“Whereas a survey conducted by the ODSP Action Coalition ... shows that 18% of respondents who currently receive the Work-Related Benefit fear having to quit their jobs as a result of the loss of this important source of funds ... ;

“Whereas people receiving ODSP already struggle to get by, and incomes on ODSP provides them with little or no ability to cover these costs from regular benefits; and ... ”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make sure that the Work-Related Benefit continues for the recipients of ODSP.

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

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: The petition is called “Nurses know—Petition for Better Care.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas providing high-quality, universal, public health care is crucial for a fair and thriving Ontario; and

“Whereas years of underfunding have resulted in cuts to registered nurses (RNs) and hurt patient care; and

“Whereas, in 2015 alone, Ontario lost more than 1.5 million hours of RN care due to cuts; and

“Whereas procedures are being off-loaded into private clinics not subject to hospital legislation; and

“Whereas funded services are being cut from hospitals and are not being provided in the community; and

“Whereas cutting skilled care means patients suffer more complications, readmissions and death;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“Implement a moratorium on RN cuts;

“Commit to restoring hospital base operating funding to at least cover the costs of inflation and population growth;

“Create a fully-funded multi-year health human resources plan to bring Ontario’s ratio of registered nurses to population up to the national average;

“Ensure hospitals have enough resources to continue providing safe, quality and integrated care for clinical procedures and stop plans for moving such procedures into private, unaccountable clinics.”

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

DÉBAT SUR LE DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

Consideration of the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

Mr. Doug Downey: I move, seconded by Ms. Ghamari, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

We, Her Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

With that, I’ll move to my remarks—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Just a second. If the page could bring the motion down here so I can read it again for members. Thank you.

Mr. Downey has moved, seconded by Ms. Ghamari, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

We, Her Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

I can now recognize the member for Barrie—Springwater—Oro—Medonte for his remarks.

Mr. Doug Downey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll note that I'm splitting my time with the member from Carleton.

Congratulations to you, Mr. Speaker, on your election. It's a testament to the faith the members in this House have in you and your abilities.

Thank you to the constituents of Barrie–Springwater–Oro-Medonte for placing their confidence in me in this most recent election. Redistribution of the ridings has created this dynamic place. From the strong agricultural areas to the urban downtown of Barrie, my riding is a microcosm of Ontario. Hugged by the shores of Lake Simcoe and stretching to the best farmlands in Ontario, Barrie–Springwater–Oro-Medonte is steeped in history.

The land is home to First Nations and Métis. History speaks of discovery of the land; I think of it more as a guided tour. The Oro African Church speaks to the history of Canada. It was built on the Third Line of Oro-Medonte and, as the township website indicates, it was built by a community of African Canadians whose roots were uniquely anchored in the history of the United Empire Loyalists and represent the important role the Black militiamen played in the defence of Upper Canada during the War of 1812. It also represents early Upper Canada land policy.

My riding is home to world-class skiing, biking and hiking at Hardwood Hills, Snow Valley, Mount St. Louis Moonstone and Horseshoe Valley.

The Trent-Severn Waterway, the largest federal asset in Ontario by size and value, makes its way through my riding. It stretches from Trenton to Georgian Bay. Lake Simcoe is an important piece of that. The Trent-Severn Waterway is important to me because I was the chair of the federal panel on the review of the Trent-Severn Waterway that brought in the report that successive federal governments still support and follow. It was an independent panel, and we made recommendations that touched on everything from how you enjoy the water to how you preserve it. The name of the report is *It's All About the Water*.

Fishing, swimming, boating or just enjoying time by the water are all part of life in Barrie–Springwater–Oro-Medonte; but my riding is more than that. There are several areas with their own unique identities: Elmvale, Anten Mills, Minesing, Shanty Bay, Oro Station, and dozens of others of which I'll be reminded, because I didn't mention them. They all have their unique history and character, and they need to be preserved. They need to have the tools to preserve their unique history and character. Midhurst is under tremendous growth pressures; we'll discuss that in later legislative sessions.

It is also home to a rich connection with the railway. Allandale is an area within Barrie that maintains its unique character. My father drove trains for 35 years. I grew up with the railway as a touchstone for the opportunity of Ontario and Canada. The GO train is an important connector, and we must maintain and expand where we can.

Barrie–Springwater–Oro-Medonte is host to the seat of government of Simcoe county and to several tremen-

dous employers, both private and public. We are host to the headquarters for the Simcoe County District School Board and the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board.

In the private sector, we have Napoleon, or Wolf Steel. It's a jewel. If you want to buy top-quality Canadian barbecues and fireplaces, they're manufactured in my riding. Barrie Welding, Sinton Transportation, the Source and Horseshoe Resort: They're all large and important employers in my riding. Burl's Creek brings world-class entertainment and people from around the globe. You may have heard of Boots and Hearts; there are several other fantastic events.

Barrie–Springwater–Oro-Medonte is host to a newly established Ahmadiyya mosque, and I was honoured to be asked to introduce them at the most recent Jalsa Salana.

Georgian College stretches across several ridings. It is headquartered in Barrie. It maintains the number one graduate employment rate, something I'm very proud of.

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We're also fortunate to have a thriving volunteer sector, whether it be Big Brothers Big Sisters, Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions Clubs, the Salvation Army and dozens of others. They help those in need, and they help the community in general.

We're also supported by a great hospital—the Royal Victoria hospital and the cancer centre—and the unique Gilda's Club that is just nearby for those in need.

The opportunities in Barrie–Springwater–Oro-Medonte are endless, and the quality of life is second to none. I've not even mentioned the artistic and cultural communities within my riding that really bring it alive. And there are more eating establishments, I'm told, in my riding than anywhere else in Ontario.

Now I'd like to turn to the throne speech.

What I heard in the throne speech was a reflection of the commitments that were made to the people of Ontario. They were honest, straightforward and achievable.

The people of Ontario can be trusted with their own money and to make their own decisions. Reducing taxes does not mean reducing the impact on the economy; it means the citizen will have more money in their pocket to spend how they need or want.

Reducing the cost of hydro is critical to the short-term needs of Ontarians and the long-term sustainability of the system.

Putting parents back in charge of child care is respecting the choices of parents.

We are seeing the results already.

And while Ontarians are being respected, we need to do our part. A line-by-line audit will ferret out government waste. Front-line workers know they can help. We welcome them. We need them. Front-line workers know how we can improve our systems without affecting service levels.

I have a track record on this issue. The Trent-Severn Waterway panel consulted with front-line workers and

thousands of others in the communities, leading to pragmatic and responsible solutions.

And we will tackle the debt and deficit in a way that is reasonable and practical.

We have a Premier who is focused, disciplined and who knows how to get the job done.

The throne speech is a reflection of the plan for the people. It is a government for the people. The people wanted someone in their corner. They wanted politics done differently. And they wanted results. The throne speech confirmed that the plan they were promised and that they voted for is the result they will get.

This is one of the reasons I entered public life: to deliver change.

Leslie Frost was born in Orillia, in Simcoe county, and became Premier in 1949. But back when he was in the military, in 1920, he wrote a letter to his parents, and he was opining on what he should do next with his military career. He said, "There is always the question of duty. A person should take part in some public matters, either civil or military." Well, I agree with Leslie Frost. Most of us in this Legislature are driven by a sense of duty to the public. I'm honoured to now be working in the Frost building.

My sense of duty began early. I sat on the dais as a page in 1983—and I hope you have the same experience. Bill Davis was Premier then. It was an interesting time. It impressed on me the importance of this Legislature. What I witnessed during that time was vigorous debate among the parties and within the parties, and it gave me a sense of the importance of decisions that are made in this space. I look forward to continuing that tradition of respect and difference of opinion.

Having been elected twice to municipal council, I've been fortunate to work with municipal, provincial and federal politicians across this country for 25 years. It's humbling to sit in this chamber.

My wife, Jennifer, a special-ed teacher, and I celebrated our 23rd wedding anniversary yesterday. It's because of her support and time, and that of my children, Andrew and Jane, and it's also because of my law partners, now former law partners, Sheri Tornosky, Patrick Lassaline and Tim Timpano, and our associate, Raquel Ness, that I could make the transition so quickly to public service.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the Honourable Doug Lewis. We started a law firm together in 2001, with other partners. He has been supportive through all the years. I believe he is the only Canadian to hold a law degree and an accounting degree, both for 50 years.

It is people like these that I'll think of as I participate in this Legislature: small business people who turn a key in the door every day and stand last in line to get paid, because they're employing other people; individuals who contribute to their communities; and families who have to make decisions about their own priorities.

But I'll also be thinking about the farmers, the stewards of the land. I worked on farms growing up, and I paid for school by farming. The agricultural sector needs our partnership.

My mother was a nurse and a family counsellor. She was a founding director of the York Region Abuse Program, looking out for those in need and the vulnerable.

Those in crisis are always in my thoughts. They may be vulnerable because of a power imbalance, bad luck, difficult choices or a failure of the system. The vulnerable in society need a government that addresses their needs. We need to have a stable government with resources to help. We need to get at the waste to make this possible.

These are all people of Ontario. I look forward to serving them as the member of provincial Parliament for Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte.

Meegwetch. Merci. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I now recognize the member from Carleton.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Merci beaucoup, monsieur le Président, et félicitations. Congratulations on your well-deserved victory. I have full confidence that you will be fair in your judgments and in your representation of this sacred institution.

I also wanted to acknowledge this territory as the traditional gathering place for many people, including the Mississaugas of the New Credit. I look forward to continuing the historic relationship between First Nations and the crown.

On June 7, the people and families of Carleton chose change—people like Earl Stanley from Metcalfe, who celebrated the 25-year anniversary of Stanley's Olde Maple Lane Farm, a family-run hospitality venue in Metcalfe; people like the former mayor and then-city councillor of Rideau-Goulbourn, Glenn Brooks, his lovely wife, Gail Brooks, and their entire family; people like Steven and Brenda Lewis and all their friends and family out in Ashton; Elizabeth McNee, Greg Thurlow and Phil McNee from Osgoode, who had never been politically involved before; Peter and Karin Gartenburg in Manotick; Rich and Joanne Wilson in Manotick; Norm and Sue Hotchkiss in Yorks Corners; Dave Eggett and Karen Newell in Greely; Roger and Penny Graves; Dave Lee, his family and all his friends and neighbours in Stittsville, including those who had never voted Progressive Conservative before; Joyce Wood, who told me that in her youth she was involved with the young Liberals and would never get involved politically; Ted Wood out in Burritts Rapids; and Kirstyn Jensen, a young mother and first-time voter in Richmond.

Mr. Speaker, local business owners like Cameron Kallos, who owns a local coffee shop in Richmond, and Mike from Mike's Garden Harvest in Manotick, chose change.

Local and well-known Carleton farm families from Kenmore and Vernon all the way to North Gower, many of whom have been on the farm for generations, including the Schoutens, the Acres, the Fosters, the Samples, the Nixons, the McCormicks, the Blacks and countless more—they all chose change.

I met hundreds of first-time and young voters at the doors, including Alaina Hyder, Jeremy Liedtke, John

Buchan, Rory Tyler and Shayla Hotchkiss; countless doctors, professionals, business owners—people who had never been politically involved or who had never voted PC before. There are too many to name, Mr. Speaker, but all of them decided to help me on my journey to represent the people of Carleton, to voice their concerns, to resolve their problems and to bring positive change not just to Carleton but across Ontario.

On June 7, over 50% of Carleton's voters chose to put their trust and faith in me. I will be forever grateful to them, and words will never express the depth of my gratitude. To those who did not vote for me, I want to make it very clear that when I say I'm here to represent everyone, I truly mean it.

Carleton is a brand new riding, comprised of Nepean–Carleton, Carleton–Mississippi Mills and Ottawa South. I wish to recognize the previous work done for the riding of Carleton by MPP Jack MacLaren, Minister Lisa MacLeod, MPP John Fraser and former MPP Norm Sterling. I look forward to continuing to work with the minister, with MPP John Fraser as well as Minister Fullerton; all of the Ottawa-region MPPs; my federal counterpart, the Honourable Pierre Poilievre; and local municipal politicians.

The riding of Carleton is home to 102,915 people. It covers the entire southern and rural portion of Ottawa's municipal boundaries as well as three rapidly growing suburban communities: Stittsville, Riverside South and Findlay Creek. Carleton is a wonderful mix of rural and urban, old and new. In fact, a month ago, the Richmond Village Association celebrated the 200th anniversary of the town of Richmond, a beautiful area that predates Confederation itself.

Agriculture is not just an extremely important sector of the economy, but it is also a way of life. In fact, some of Carleton's families go back generations to the first settlers on the land. Carleton's farmers play an important role in Ottawa. John and Sandra Vandenberg of Rideau Pines Farm in North Gower supply produce to top-tier Ottawa restaurants like Beckta and Play. Tom and Marlene Black on Fallowfield Road have donated part of their farmland to the Ottawa Food Bank in support of their Community Harvest Program. In 2016, the Black Family Farm donated over 90,000 pounds of fresh produce alone to the food bank.

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The Richmond and Metcalfe Fairs both predate Confederation, and every year farmers from across the region gather to participate in the Ottawa Carleton Plowmen's Association Plowing Match.

Carleton's community and business associations are numerous, vibrant and diverse. We have countless community parades, festivals, art shows, sporting competitions, Canada Day celebrations, Christmas events and more.

It has been truly a pleasure getting to know the people of Carleton. The friendships that I have made and the lessons that I have learned will last a lifetime. The most important lesson I have learned is to listen with both ears.

Mr. Speaker, it is truly a privilege for me to rise in this House today to address you and my fellow members as the democratically elected representative for the new riding of Carleton. I do not use the phrase “democratically elected” lightly. You see, Mr. Speaker, I was born in Iran in 1985, shortly after the Iranian Revolution that overthrew the Shah and replaced him with a theocracy ruled by strict Islamic ideology, a theocracy overrun with corruption and greed, a theocracy that throws people in jail for criticizing the government, hangs homosexuals, stones women, and allows its citizens to suffer and live in poverty while pocketing billions of dollars in oil money.

My father, having lived in Texas for almost a decade in the 1970s, returned to Iran after the revolution had taken place to settle down and start a family. When I was born, he looked at the infant girl in his arms and realized he could not raise a daughter in that environment. And so my parents gave up everything they owned and said goodbye to their families, and on May 24, 1986, we landed at Pierre Elliott Trudeau airport in Montreal. My parents had two suitcases, \$50 in their pockets, and a one-year-old baby girl, me. They had no friends, no family, no contacts. My father tells me that our first night in Canada, he rented an unfurnished apartment. My parents slept on newspapers that night, and I slept bundled up in my father's jacket.

My parents gave up everything they had so that they could raise their family in a free and democratic country, a country like Canada. They came here with nothing and they expected nothing. My parents taught me to work hard, to play by the rules, to be thankful for our freedoms, and, most importantly, Mr. Speaker, to respect and to give back to the people and communities that built Canada and made it the best country in the world.

If someone had told my parents that not only would I be the first person in the family to become a lawyer, but also that 32 years later I would have the opportunity and privilege to serve the people of Ontario right here in the House as the first-ever Iranian immigrant woman to become a Canadian politician, I don't think they would have believed it.

The fact that the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario is the first party to welcome someone like me into its fold speaks volumes about our party's commitment and dedication to equality and equal opportunity for everyone. This government is truly a government for the people. The throne speech was a clear indication of that fact, and I echo Mr. Downey's comments in that regard. I am excited and hopeful for what this government can and will do in the next four years for the people. I hope that my story and my journey inspires others to give back and serve their communities in any way possible. I am incredibly grateful to the people of Carleton for placing their confidence in me, and I promise to do everything in my power to ensure that their voices, concerns and needs are heard in this House.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It is my privilege and honour to rise as leader of the official opposition and to respond to the throne speech.

I want to first acknowledge that we are here on the traditional territory of the Wendat, Anishnawbe, Haudenosaunee, Métis and the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, and I want to start by saying that I think the throne speech should have acknowledged that as well. It would have been the appropriate thing for a Premier to do in a throne speech, a sign of respect and recognition of the need for meaningful reconciliation between the government of Ontario and First Nations and Indigenous peoples. But what was said in the throne speech, and what was left unsaid, is very troubling. Decisions that this Premier has made already are deeply worrisome for me, for New Democrats and for most Ontario families.

I think there's one thing that everyone in this Legislature would agree upon, and that is that we live in an incredible province, an absolutely incredible province—a place, in fact, where everyone should be able to build a great life. But today, life is getting harder for many, many families—for so many families.

Our children's schools, as we speak—children are probably not too excited about going back to school, but they'll be going back to school in September, and many of them will be going back to schools that are literally crumbling: schools that are crumbling from neglect, where kids can't even drink the water, where roofs are falling in, where heating systems don't work. So in the wintertime, kids will once again be with their mittens on in cold classrooms. In the fall, if it's a very hot fall, which it may indeed be, kids will be passing out from the heat and the lack of air circulation.

Young people in our province are struggling to start their lives with a mountain of student debt on their backs.

Our hospitals, as we all know, have been pushed to the brink by two decades of cuts, layoffs and bed closures, leading to a crisis of hallway medicine and overcrowding, the likes of which we've never seen before in this province, where people are left in untenable situations where our front-line health care workers are asked to work miracles each and every day just to try to provide the basics for people in hospitals.

In Sudbury, a gentleman in his eighties—I believe he's in his eighties—was forced to be in a room that was once a shower room, a modified washroom, with his bed propped up against a toilet at his pillow. So his pillow was beside a toilet. This is what people are having to deal with in our hospitals.

Public transit is in a shambles. People are not getting the kind of service that they need and deserve when it comes to public transit. When it comes to transportation overall, people are stuck in terrible situations. Whether you're on a highway in traffic and congestion that leaves you hours on the road for a trip that should take maybe 40 minutes—I speak from experience coming from Hamilton. I know a number of members in our caucus, and in the other caucus across the way, the government caucus, experience the same thing.

All you need to do is to be around downtown Toronto and drive by some of the streetcar stops, and you'll see lineups blocks long of people waiting as streetcar after streetcar goes by, not able to get on because the streetcars are overcrowded.

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Senior citizens in our province are living in reprehensible conditions, whether it's trying to struggle at home without the kind of quality and frequency of home care that they need, or whether it's sitting or lying in a long-term-care facility without the kind of hands-on care that ensures that you have not only the quality and dignity of attention that you need, but even human interaction—horror stories of people who have gone 18 or 20 hours without any human interaction at all in long-term care.

Millions and millions of people in our province are working low-paid jobs, long hours, with no health benefits. Millions of people are skipping their prescriptions and living with pain in their mouth because they don't have drug and dental coverage at work. These are the challenges that millions of people in our province are facing day in and day out. They're the legacy of the last Liberal government and the last Conservative government, two governments that sold off our public assets, cut funding to hospitals and schools, and made life tougher for everyday families.

Now Premier Ford is taking us from bad to worse. Instead of moving us forward, he's dragging us backwards.

But I can tell you this: New Democrats know that it does not have to be this way. It absolutely does not have to be this way. In a province as great as Ontario, we can solve these problems. We can help people build a great life for themselves and their kids and move our entire province forward.

As the largest official opposition in a generation, New Democrats have been elected to this Legislature to put forward our vision of hope and optimism, and we will be doing that each and every day when we come to work in this place. We will be constructive, and we will be focused on working to make people's lives better. But whenever this Premier makes decisions that will hurt people, you can count on New Democrats to speak up and fight back against this Conservative government. That's why we're here. That's why we're all here today, and that's why we will be here day in and day out: to speak loud and clear against this throne speech today and against the government that is serving its friends, not the people of Ontario.

I can say that the people of Ontario have told me they're very weary of governments that serve their friends instead of serving Ontarians. We had enough of that with the previous government. Ontarians had enough of that with the previous government. I'm sure they're extremely disappointed to see the newly elected Premier follow in those same negative, selfish footsteps that are more about your friends and your well-connected insiders than the people of Ontario.

I believe that the Premier of Ontario should work for all Ontarians. That's the job, to work for all Ontarians.

The job of the Premier is to do what is right for the entire province, but that's not what we've seen from this Premier and this Conservative government thus far. Instead, we see decisions being made in secret, behind closed doors, for the benefit of Conservative friends, insiders and lobbyists.

Le premier ministre travaille pour ses amis. Il devrait travailler pour l'Ontario.

The throne speech says that people's confidence should be restored; people's confidence should be restored in the hydro system, in Ontario's Hydro One. Well, I can tell you that the only way to restore people's confidence in Hydro One is to reverse the damage that the Liberals did and bring Hydro One back into public hands. That is the only way: to reverse the privatization that the Conservatives started in the late 1990s and early 2000s and reverse the privatization that the Liberals continued with in the selling-off of Hydro One. Bring hydro back into public hands. That's what will change people's belief in Hydro One. That's what will help us to think that Hydro One can finally get back to doing what it's supposed to do, which is serve the interests of the people, not the interests of private shareholders.

You know what else could restore people's faith in Hydro One? Capping private profits and ending mandatory time-of-use pricing. Those are the things that will help people to have faith in Hydro One once again. Cap those private profits. Get rid of time-of-use pricing so that people don't have to be punished for cooking dinner at dinnertime. Bring hydro rates down and restore full public ownership and control over our hydro system. That's the plan that would finally, I think, bring Ontarians to a place where they can once again trust that their electricity system is operating in their interest.

But instead of doing that, instead of doing the one thing that could have actually reversed the course for Hydro One and our electricity system, the Premier decided instead to negotiate an insider deal with Mayo Schmidt behind closed doors, and then he refused to tell Ontario—Ontario families, ratepayers, businesses—what that deal really was. In fact, we all remember very clearly, with all of his bluster, the Premier saying that the CEO would get nothing, he'd get absolutely zero. Well, now it's pretty clear that that Premier was not telling the truth. Kind of like during the whole election campaign, I'd say: not telling the truth. Instead—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. I would ask the leader of the official opposition to withdraw that comment.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Withdrawn.

The Premier claims that the CEO was going to get nothing, but the opposite has, of course, occurred. The "zero, absolutely zero," in fact, turned into something quite else. It's clear that the Premier turned the six-million-dollar man into the nine-million-dollar man—or at least we think it's only \$9 million; it could be more. It could be \$10 million; it could be \$12 million. Who knows? We don't know because the Premier is not telling. He's not making public the deal that he cut

behind closed doors with Mayo Schmidt. People deserve to know. How much will the Ford-Schmidt deal really cost Hydro One ratepayers?

I took a brief look at the title of the bill that was tabled just a few moments ago here in this Legislature. It looks like the government's going to want to be playing a shell game with executive salaries at Hydro One. I haven't read any of the text, but when they say in a title—where is it that I saw that? Here it is: "Amended to provide that the rates charged by Hydro One Limited and its subsidiaries shall not reflect amounts paid for executive compensation." What does that mean? That means the Ontario Energy Board Act "is amended to provide that the rates charged by Hydro One Limited and its subsidiaries shall not reflect amounts paid for executive compensation."

So what's going to happen? The government is playing a shell game. Premier Ford is already saying, in his very first legislative act, "People of Ontario, we're going to play a funny-money shell game with you, and we're going to do it from day one, from the first bill that we table in the Legislature, because we are going to pretend that no executives at Hydro One are actually going to get paid." But of course they're going to get paid. So what are they going to do? They are going to get them paid through the tax dollar perhaps. Well, they are still coming out of the same pocket. Isn't it Conservatives who always say, "There's one taxpayer"?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Not anymore.

1410

Ms. Andrea Horwath: No. Apparently when they're in government, they don't think that anymore, because they are going to pretend that somehow these executives are not going to get paid at all. But they are. They're going to get paid through the tax base. Why? So that the government can pretend that they are doing something to get those rates down that has meaning.

The only way to put Hydro One back on the proper course is to get it back in public hands and get those million-dollar salaries down to where they belong. How much is the interim CEO of Hydro One making? Does anybody know? We don't know. Which of the Premier's wealthy, elite friends is he going to parachute into the CEO's position next? Who is coming in next? Which of his own Conservative cronies are going to replace the old board of Hydro One? We said this all along. He is going to get rid of Mayo Schmidt and put his own crony in there. He's going to get rid of the board of directors and put his own cronies into those board chairs. Apparently, he's going to pay people through some secret way, because it's not going to be paid for through Hydro One; so says this legislation. I guess we'll all just have to wait and see when Premier Ford decides to finally show the people of Ontario what his intentions are—if ever. If ever.

People deserve so much better than these secret deals. They deserve so much better than secret deals that help insiders and friends and lobbyists of the Conservative Party. But since the election, we've seen the same thing

happening over and over again. And it's just been a couple of weeks. The Premier's throne speech and his decisions since taking office show that he is not working for the people of Ontario. He is driven by insiders, favours and backroom deals. That's what this Premier is all about.

The cancellation of cap-and-trade: There's another example. Protecting our clean air, fresh water and land is so, so very important. Most Ontarians believe that's an important thing to do. Those are important pieces of responsibility that we need to take seriously. Taking action against climate change is our responsibility not only for ourselves and our children today, but it is our responsibility also to future generations. But the Premier's decision to cancel cap-and-trade puts our air, water and land at risk, and charges people more to do so. Cancelling cap-and-trade is a terrible decision. It drags Ontario backwards and denies the reality of climate change. And the cost? Well, the cost is to be determined yet again.

I have to say I was shocked when I was in Hamilton a year ago or so, maybe a little more. There were a lot of rallies going on around Hydro One and the privatization and people clambering to get Hydro One back into public hands. At some of those rallies, the former Acting Premier, Mr. Fedeli, was in my own hometown of Hamilton. He was the finance critic at the time. He started promising the people of Hamilton that the Conservative government was going to rip up all the green energy contracts. I said to him then and I say to this government now and to the people of Ontario that that is an extremely irresponsible thing to do. Tearing up contracts sight unseen is an irresponsible thing to do.

When Mr. McGuinty tore up contracts for two gas plants, all he would admit to was that it was going to cost \$40 million. Well, we remember how much it actually cost the people of Ontario for two gas plants: \$1.1 billion. Because guess what. There's something called contract law—who knew?—in the province of Ontario.

Here we have a government that is making the same bad mistakes that the previous government made for political purposes, just like the previous government did. How shameful is that? How shameful is it that we do not learn from the mistakes of the previous government and we put this province into such a precarious position as to tear up contracts? Who knows how many billions of dollars that's going to cost us reimbursing companies that have bought—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Credits.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —the credits that are now apparently worthless? How many billions of dollars is it going to cost to reimburse those companies for paper that is useless, for carbon credits that are not worth anything anymore? That's going to be billions of dollars in and of itself.

Inaction on climate change is going to cost Ontarians as well, not only today but for generations to come. If the Premier were working for all Ontarians, he would be redoubling his efforts to fight climate change and to force

big polluters to pay the price for their emissions. Instead, he's allowing big polluters off the hook.

People deserve to know, Premier Ford—people deserve to know—which big polluters lobbied you. Which big polluters lobbied the Premier to let them off the hook for their emissions and stick families with the bill? Because that's what's going to happen: The families of this province will be stuck with the bill.

Decision after decision has been driven by special interests of lobbyists and insiders. That's what this government has been all about so far—not what's best for Ontarians, but what's best for lobbyists, insiders, people the Premier owes favours to.

This Premier is absolutely wrong to rip up the health and physical education curriculum and drag Ontario back to the 1990s. It's a race back in time that will only put students at risk and deny young people the support that they deserve.

Now, look, I'm not going to pretend that I wasn't upset with the Liberal government when they decided to push that curriculum out without a communications plan in place, only so that they could take the eyes off of another Liberal scandal. They were irresponsible for doing that. That's why parents and families felt blindsided. Parents and families should never feel blindsided by something that is going to impact their children. But the reason they felt blindsided is that the government of the day, the Liberals, were more focused on their own political backsides than they were on engaging those parents with the rollout of the curriculum and a proper communications plan. Those are the facts. People can go back in the media and look it up. The Liberals acted in their own political interests and, as a result, created a firestorm—a firestorm of anger from parents and pushback on the curriculum.

The curriculum needed to be updated. It's the same curriculum that my son had when he was in school, and he's 25 years old now. There was no such thing as cyberbullying. That wasn't happening back then. Other bullying was happening, but not cyberbullying. Sexting, texting, Instagram: All of those things were not part of his reality. Those things are part of the reality today. Social media is rampant. I can't even talk to my son on the phone anymore. He will only respond when I text him. That's just the way it is; he won't talk on the phone.

The curriculum that Doug Ford will make teachers use this fall will not address the realities of today. In fact, that curriculum was developed and used and taught before same-sex marriage was legal in our province. It's absolutely shameful. It is not good enough—not good enough—to keep young people safe. That curriculum has put young people at risk over the years because it wasn't addressing their need to know the risks and realities they face in this century—not the last century, this century. It fails to keep people safe from cyberbullying, it fails to teach kids about consent, and the old curriculum completely ignores sexual orientation, gender identity and LGBTQ+ families. All of this is ignored by the previous curriculum. It's a painful barrier to queer youth when it

comes to being themselves, feeling supported and valued for the amazing individuals that they are.

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Here's the sad truth in the province of Ontario today: The Premier of our province, Mr. Ford, cares more about the favours that he owes to social conservatives than he does about keeping kids safe and keeping young people safe. He made a backroom deal with his far-right lobbyists to force this outdated sex ed curriculum on students and keep valuable information that they absolutely need away from them. Our kids deserve so much better from the Premier of this province. They deserve so much better.

I have to say that I was proud to stand up with advocates, students and MPPs from Toronto—the member from St. Paul's was with us, in the member for Toronto Centre's riding—as we were at The 519, the centre of the LGBTQ community in this great city, to deliver a message collectively to this province: Stop catering to your social conservative friends. Stop catering to them. Stop trying to drag Ontario back to the 1990s. Do what's right for young people, for children, for students and keep the updated health and physical education curriculum in place and keep our young people safe.

Teaching young people about consent is not an option; it is a responsibility. It is our responsibility. It's the Premier's responsibility. Keeping children safe from cyberbullying is not an option; it is our responsibility. It is the Premier's responsibility. And making sure that queer youth are safe and supported in all of our classrooms is not an option in our Ontario; it is our responsibility. New Democrats will not stand by silently while this Premier puts the safety and well-being of Ontario children at risk so that he can check off the box of the favours that he has got to give to his social conservative friends. We will stand with students and we will stand with parents and educators and fight to make sure that the students have the information that they need to be safe and supported in 2018.

We see it again and again: This Premier is driven by what's best for Conservative friends, insiders and lobbyists, not what's best for Ontario. There are so many glaring examples. Instead of reaching out to First Nations and Indigenous peoples, instead of working to build a true government-to-government relationship based on respect, instead of taking action to support reconciliation, instead of working from day one to deliver clean water, safe housing, decent health care and appropriate education to every First Nations community in Ontario, we see a Premier who can't even appoint a full-time Minister of Indigenous Affairs, and instead delivers a throne speech that completely ignores First Nations, Métis and Indigenous peoples.

Instead of listening to so many Ontarians who support greater oversight and transparency in policing, we see a Premier who has chosen to stop the implementation of new measures designed to help restore the public trust.

I want to say this: New Democrats know how important our policing community is. We've worked hard with

the police associations in individual communities as MPPs—the PAO and the OPPA. It's not an easy job. It's a tough job. It's a job that comes with some vulnerabilities, there's no doubt, but it's also a job that comes with a lot of power, a lot of responsibility and a lot of requirement for proper oversight and accountability. In fact, if I'm not mistaken, even the president of the Police Association of Ontario says that he acknowledges that there needs to be accountability and oversight in policing, and that it needed to be updated.

Instead of listening to Ontarians about that need to update that oversight and transparency, we have quite the opposite with Mr. Ford. So the question arises: Who is it that the Premier made a backroom deal with on this one, and why is he choosing to ignore the Tulloch review and the thousands of Ontarians who participated in consultations on these new changes? Two years of consultations. Two rounds of committee. Two rounds of public hearings after the consultations took place. Instead of protecting families, instead of making sure that we brought the police oversight up to speed, up to scale of where it should be in today's environment, Mr. Ford backtracked on that. Who had his ear? Who was in the backroom when that deal was cut?

You know, there are many, many examples. In fact, I'm going to keep talking about them.

Instead of protecting families, for example, and consumers; instead of making life more affordable—I thought I heard the Premier say that during the campaign. Didn't you? He was going to make life more affordable for families. That's what he said he was going to do. But instead of doing that, the Premier decided to side with ticket scalpers and make an evening out even more expensive for families. Who would do that? Who would make it more expensive, more out of reach, for a family to go to the ball game together, or to go to a concert together?

You say you want to make life more affordable. One of the first things you do is make sure that ticket scalpers, scalper bots, companies that make profits from ripping off families take precedence over the families of this province? How shameful is that? I want to know who lobbied the Premier. Who was in the backroom cutting that deal? Who lobbied the Premier to make life harder for folks and to help ticket scalpers turn a profit off of hard-working families?

Here's another one. Instead of building the universal pharmacare program that everyone needs in this province, so that everyone can get the prescription drugs they need, we see a Premier privatizing public drug coverage for kids—in fact, another example of this government dragging us backwards. While the rest of Canada is talking about how we get to a universal pharmacare program for our country, the one province that was ready to take that on elected Premier Ford, and now he's dragging us backwards, privatizing drug coverage for children and youth. I wonder who lobbied the Premier for that to happen. Who lobbied the Premier to do that and to slam the brakes on all of that momentum that has been growing in universal pharmacare across the nation?

Instead of investing in our hospitals and hiring more nurses, instead of fixing the damage that the Liberals have done, we see a Premier who is choosing to give a \$1-million contract to the former president of the Conservative Party. That's the first act in health care: Hire your buddy, the former president of the Conservative Party of Ontario. Instead of helping patients and front-line health care professionals to do their jobs better and more effectively, instead of making sure that we're funding hospitals at the levels that they should be funded, this Premier is more focused on his well-connected friends than he is on patients.

In fact, why? Why is he focused less on patients than he is on classic political patronage? Why is he focused on helping insiders and lobbyists instead of Ontario patients? The answer is clear from the throne speech and from the decisions that have already been made: This Premier isn't trying to unite and find common ground with Ontario. He's more interested in his own desire for power, even if that means dividing Ontario.

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As leader of the official opposition, I'm very, very proud to be here on this side of the House amongst my amazing team of NDP MPPs, every single one of them—absolutely every single one of them. I'm proud to speak up with these wonderful representatives, and with the majority of Ontarians, to speak against this throne speech and the Premier's plan to drag Ontario backwards.

We have an amazing team of MPPs, the largest official opposition in 33 years to sit in this chamber. Fifty per cent of our official opposition bench are women. We have the largest number of women that the Ontario NDP has ever elected in our history. We have an incredibly diverse group of members, reflecting the reality of our incredibly diverse province.

Speaker, I don't think I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks that I will be sharing my time. I will be sharing my time with another member. I'm not sure how much time we have left.

But back to the MPPs on this side of the House, on the official opposition benches. Our opposition benches reflect not only the diversity in terms of gender and ethno-racial cultural backgrounds and religious backgrounds, but we represent regions from all over our province, and we're very, very proud of that. From Ottawa and Kingston to St. Catharines and Kitchener, from Toronto, Brampton and Oshawa to Windsor and London, from Sudbury and Timmins to Sioux Lookout and Thunder Bay, I am so proud of this team of New Democrats.

In the days and weeks and months to come, the people of Ontario can count on New Democrats to hold the Premier accountable for every decision that hurts the people of this province, and those decisions are already happening at breakneck speed. We will continue to put forward our vision of hope and positive change.

New Democrats will work for all Ontarians, not for insiders—definitely not for friends of the Conservatives. We'll work to make life affordable and to make our great

cities, including Toronto, more livable for everyday families. We'll stand up for working people and speak up for higher wages, better benefits and the security that working families deserve. We'll stand up to protect our clean air and fresh water, and take action to fight climate change. We'll speak up for more affordable housing and better public transit in all of our communities. We'll fight for a future where young people have more opportunities and less debt, where our children have the classroom supports that they need to thrive and where we invest more in school repairs—not \$100 million less, like this Premier has already decided. Yes, we will stand up for universal public health care every day, and for universal drug and dental coverage for all Ontarians, regardless of age, regardless of where you live, regardless of where you work.

This great province is one that will have New Democrats working on its behalf each and every day, because we can build a better future for everyone here in Ontario, for every single person, for every single family. New Democrats will be a stronger voice than ever before for the hope and the vision that Ontario needs and deserves.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing with the NDP leadoff, I now recognize the member from Timmins. You have approximately 20 minutes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say, first of all, that it's the first time I've been called a member from Timmins in this House by you, and it's certainly a change to the riding that I used to represent. It is now shared with my good friend the member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay, who is now going to a meeting, by the way—just so you guys know.

First of all, I want to say the following thing: It is a pleasure and an honour to follow the lead of our leader, Andrea Horwath, who I think in this last election, as she always has, has been inspiring and has shown a vision for Ontarians that many people have responded to. I've got to say, that only bodes well for us as a province and us as a party into the future. We really want to thank you for the work that you continue to do on behalf of all progressives in this province.

I want to add a couple of things and just take off from where our leader, Andrea Horwath, started.

La première affaire qui m'a vraiment frappé avec ce discours du trône : c'est la première fois, je pense, que j'ai écouté un discours du trône où il n'y a pas eu un mot en français, et il n'y avait aucune référence aux dossiers francophones de cette province. C'était vraiment, vraiment marquant. Je le sais, moi, quand je suis sorti d'ici—les communautés francophones qui étaient ici pour écouter le discours du trône, elles ont commenté. Justement, cette fin de semaine dans mon comté, puis j'imagine que c'est la même chose avec, par exemple, Nickel Belt et autres, le monde qui a payé attention—c'est pour dire que ce n'est pas tout le monde qui regarde les discours du trône, mais il y a du monde qui payé attention—ils ont trouvé ça, comme communauté francophone, inquiétant.

Ce que ça veut dire pour la communauté francophone à plus long terme, c'est encore à voir, mais ça ne débute pas sur le bon pied. Je peux dire que la communauté francophone est là. Elle est très organisée. Elle veut s'organiser et s'assurer que le bien-être de tous les francophones dans cette province est pris à coeur quand ça vient aux décisions que ce Parlement et que ce gouvernement vont prendre. Si ce n'est pas le cas, je peux vous dire que les néo-démocrates vont être solides en supportant les besoins des francophones de cette province.

The second thing I want to touch on is exactly what our leader said, which was—I never thought it would be possible, quite frankly, at this point in a revolution, that there would not be mention of reconciliation in that throne speech. There has been so much work done by so many, from the opposition side of the House to the government side of the House previously, federally, provincially, chambers of commerce, municipalities—you name it—school boards. We've all been struggling to figure out how we start moving towards reconciliation because, finally, after 160 years, we're coming to account that we didn't do very well when it comes to our First Nations brothers and sisters.

Sol Mamakwa, who is the member from Kiiwetinoong, from our riding, knows all too well the conditions in his communities: no running water that you can drink; streets that are not paved, just choking with dust as you go down and walk into any community; substandard housing, where you've got 20 or 25 people living in the same house—how does a child learn in that environment? How does a family function in a way that gives children hope and gives families hope for the future? A lack of employment opportunities—and the list goes on. And we wonder why we have child and youth suicide to the degree that we have in our communities? Well, I think a very good person to tell that story is going to be our member from Kiiwetinoong, who has lived it from the time he was a child until today.

I think we are blessed to have elected the very first First Nations person in this Legislature. I just urge all of us in this House, on all sides of the chamber, to listen well and to take heed to what he has to say, but more importantly to take action. I think that was, really, the disappointing part. There was a sense that no government in today's climate would not say something about continuing the path of reconciliation—and we did not see that in this throne speech, which I think, quite frankly, was not only a disservice to First Nations members, but it's also fairly disappointing to a whole bunch of other people in this province who are struggling trying to figure out how we move forward in understanding how difficult it's been for so many years for so many of our friends who live in First Nations communities.

I want to turn my attention to—I'm going to be parochial here; I'm going to talk about Timmins for a minute because it's directly related to the throne speech, and that is our hospitals across the province. But I'm going to use Timmins and District Hospital just as an

example. Our hospital is a regional hospital that takes referrals up on the James Bay coast and down into Timiskaming–Cochrane and up in Mushkegowuk–James Bay. People come to our hospital much in the same way they go to Sudbury or London or Niagara or other hospitals they are referred into. It's a regional hospital.

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Each and every year it has been a struggle because the previous government decided that they were going to freeze those budgets for how many years? Five or six years they were frozen. Our hospitals across this province, in your ridings and in mine—we've had hospitals struggle to provide basic services. Our leader said that we've got patients who are in hallways, we've got patients who are sleeping in washrooms. We have services that have been cancelled, and surgeries that have been cancelled or delayed. It has just been a real problem, especially on the elective surgery side. When it comes to somebody in an emergency, as far as a heart attack or something like that, you get into the system quick enough. But the point is, all of our hospitals are struggling.

This year, we're looking at, if nothing is done at the Timmins and District Hospital, a \$5-million deficit. Is it because the CEOs at the hospital gave raises to all the workers? No. Is it because the executive people gave themselves big raises? No. Was it because of anything other than just increased costs because our aging population, more and more, is using our hospital? The cost of electricity is going up, the cost of everything is going up, and as a result of all of those things, those costs are out of control of the hospital. When their doors are open, which is 24 hours a day, every day of the year, somebody walks into that emergency and somebody has got to take care of you. That costs money—\$5 million just this year alone.

I can tell you, and as you all know as local representatives, this government did nothing in this budget that gave me the warm feeling that you were actually going to take seriously the deficits in the future. Yes, there was mention in the throne speech about some nebulous things that you may do, but in the end, I think for hospitals like TDH and other hospitals across this province, it doesn't resolve the long-standing problem that we have been raising in this House and that you raised with us in opposition to the Liberals—with Andrea Horwath leading the charge, and we had some of the Conservatives coming along when they were in opposition.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The same on hydro.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The same on hydro; whatever happened on your way to government is a whole other issue. But the point is, those issues need to be addressed, and if they're not addressed, we're going to be in deep trouble when it comes to our health care system.

But I very much fear what our leader pointed out is exactly what's going to happen. The very first thing that this government did—not the very first thing, but one of the first things—is that they decided to hire one of their friends. That friend, it's like—you know that show where you used to have to dial a friend when you had trouble?

You used to go dial a friend in order to get the proper answer so you could stay alive. Well, this is not phone-a-friend; this is hire-a-friend. So here we've got the Conservatives hiring a friend in order to not just go into the health care system willy-nilly to give government advice; this is about privatization. I very much worry—because of their first step, privatizing OHIP+ for people under 25 years old—that this will be about: How do we move more of our health care system into the private sector? Which won't save us any money, but it will certainly make the social ideologues on the other side feel a lot better.

I want to give you a little story. A good friend of mine who's a neighbour about two or three doors over from where I live—and I'm not going to mention a name because I don't have their permission. He got sick about two years ago when he was in Florida. He landed in a hospital, was in ICU and almost died. They actually called a priest. They did the whole bit. The family was contacted to get to Florida, because it didn't look like he was going to make it. But, thank God, he was able to make it—proper treatment, what they needed to do when it came to his treatment resolved this issue, and he's alive and well. In fact, my wife and I went to visit him and his wife just the other day.

But the point is this: I asked my neighbour and his wife, "When you get the insurance bill from that private hospital and that private health care system in the United States, can you give me a copy of the bill?" The bill for 11 or 12 days of hospital stay and care: \$475,000 was the cost, including the doctors. So I took that bill and I gave it to the Timmins and District Hospital, and I said, "I know the private sector does everything better, and certainly they're a lot cheaper than what it is here in Ontario, using that bad old government that Mr. Ford talks about wanting to get off the backs of everybody." Do you know how much it was if you were in Ontario for the same treatment? People will be astounded: \$27,000. Talk about efficiency: We can do it in Ontario for \$27,000, where in Florida it's \$475,000, because the private sector does it better. I've got to get that government off my back. Oh my God, that hurts. Holy jeez, I'm telling you. But it's a sad reality, I think, where this government is going, and time will tell.

I want to touch very quickly on both the cap-and-trade and the wind farm deal that's being cancelled. I want to come at it from a little bit of a different perspective. The first thing is that Ontario has, over the century, developed a reputation for being a stable place to do business. If you invest in Ontario, you've got no government that is going to change the rules on you in some way that is going to put you at a disadvantage, and our regulation, although tough, is fair. If I'm a mining company, a forestry company, an agricultural farm or whatever it might be, we have tough rules for good reason, because we need to make sure we safeguard our environment, but we do things in a sustainable way.

The interesting thing about what these social conservatives are doing across the way is that they've decided

for reasons of rhetoric—and I use the word "rhetoric" as the example—to pass legislation they introduced today that gives them the ability to say to the companies that are going to be essentially hurt by the cancellation of the contracts that they've done, "You can't sue." Well, it's not only that you can't sue; the rules are all being changed in a way that affects people who have already made decisions to invest in our province.

So what kind of message are we sending to the foreign investors and local investors in our economy about what may happen to you if you invest in Ontario? You're saying, "Well, you know what? If you come and invest"—in an energy project in this particular case—"what you see is not what you get." What you see might be what you get, but you know what? Precedent is being set by the Doug Ford government that, in fact, we're going to change the rules after the contracts were signed. The government is making this, I believe, a bit of a banana republic.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, you might look at me and say that's a little bit harsh, but the point is this—and you're Conservatives; you should understand this. It shouldn't be a New Democrat having to preach to Conservatives the idea of providing a stable business climate in the province of Ontario, but this is exactly what I'm trying to do.

I'm saying I'm with you: There are a lot of things that the Liberals did when they started privatizing and accelerating the privatization of Ernie Eves and Mike Harris. I agree with you: That whole privatization initiative by Eves and Harris that the Liberals took to a different height has really hurt us here in Ontario. It has hurt our manufacturing base and it has hurt individual ratepayers in this province—no question. But you're changing the rules in such a way that you're saying, "If you invest in Ontario, there is a possibility after you've spent the money that we're going to change the rules. And by the way, we're not going to let you sue us, because we're going to pass legislation that hopefully will prevent it."

Now, there's a whole other issue out there. Will this actually work in the long run? Because there's the WTO, there's NAFTA, there's all kinds of other trading agreements that we have to deal with, so who knows how this is going to shake down. But at the very least, what it does is that it puts into question, I believe, Ontario's stability as a place to invest, because if you've got, in this case, one wind farm—I don't know how much they're on the hook for, but they're being told that they might be compensated—oh yes, this is the other thing: They can't sue, but the government reserves the right to compensate at the rate that they decide, out of taxpayers' dollars. It's like, okay, so instead of charging me on my hydro bill, you're going to take it out of the other pocket. It's still the little guy.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Or out of the hospitals or—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Or out of the hospitals or whatever. But the point is that it's the little guy who is going

to pay. The big guys on the top, the larger corporations, are in a bit better shape. But when you start doing those kinds of things, that means to say that all of us as taxpayers are going to pay for what you're trying to do.

The other thing that I just can't believe: I sat on committee with Peter Tabuns for what, about a year and a half? I think my good friend the Minister of Housing was there for a while. Certainly the Minister of Transportation was there; who else, I can't remember—I think the Minister of Community and Social Services. We argued against a government that was cancelling contracts, because we thought—and the Conservatives, I think, thought—that this was the wrong thing to do. The deal was a bad one from the beginning, we both could agree. We wouldn't have done what the Liberals did when it came to those gas plants, but we also agree that you can't rip up contracts once they've been signed and once the company has spent money. It'll cost you billions of dollars.

As Andrea Horwath pointed out earlier, it was the Premier of the Ontario then, Dalton McGuinty, who said—how much was it going to be at first?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Forty.

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Mr. Gilles Bisson: It was like 40 million bucks. "Oh, don't worry. It's only 40 million bucks." It ended up being one-point-some-odd billion dollars when it was all done.

So what has happened to you guys on your way to the government side? Did you forget the lessons learned in opposition? You're now saying, not just on the wind contracts that you're cancelling but on the cap-and-trade, that you are essentially going to put the province in the position of having to pay billions—and I say billions; as Carl Sagan used to say, billions and billions—of dollars that we're going to have to pay out of the tax base as a result of your actions. Tell me how that is any kind of common sense when it comes to what the Conservatives are trying to do.

I think the problem on the other side is the accusation that the Premier made during the election that supposedly we're a bunch of ideologues on this side. There are the ideologues, over there. My God, it's like right-wing social conservative ideologues. "You know, if you don't like sex education, we can turn the clock back. If you want to sue the government, don't worry. We've got legislation that will make Ontario a difficult place to invest," because nobody is going to know what the heck the rules are when it comes to liability of the crown, when it comes to a contract that they may have signed with the crown over anything.

You guys are creating a precedent in this legislation that, quite frankly, is shocking for a Conservative government to bring forward. I can only take out of it that what we've got in this particular government, under Doug Ford, is right-wing ideologues who decide that they're going to play to a social conservative base.

I don't have a problem with playing to our base, to a degree. We all do that, New Democrats or Conservatives.

I understand that. But you have to have a semblance of reason when you're doing it.

I can tell you that Andrea Horwath would not put the taxpayers on the hook for what is a political decision that this government is about to make—never in a million years. We wouldn't start ripping up contracts after they have been signed, because we understand that is just bad policy and it will cost you a lot more money.

What we would have done is never privatize the hydro system in the first place; make sure that we invest in public services in a way that allows us to make sure that Ontario is strong and able to grow; and create a business climate in this province that is stable and is somewhere people can come and invest with some confidence.

But I've got to tell you, what I see in this legislation tells me that we're—how much time?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): Two minutes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Two minutes? Oh, that's very good. I will end at that point. I will just say—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You're quite welcome. I'm glad that I finally made you happy. This is a good thing.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just for that, you goad me into another two minutes.

Anyway, I'd just say it is rather shocking that a Conservative government would bring in legislation that destabilizes the business confidence in this province when it comes to internal and external investors who are willing to invest in projects that have anything to do with the government. If you had told me that 10 years ago, if you had told me that 10 days before the last election, I would have never thought that that's what they were up to, that it was all about utilizing extraordinary powers in order to achieve their ideological objectives, which I think was the wrong thing to do.

I'll just end on the following note: This throne speech gives an opportunity for members to be able to debate this motion. I'm hoping that the government will reflect somewhat on some of what we have to say. I don't expect you to change it all, but I think there are some decisions that you're about to make which are going to be your undoing. And if you think Kathleen Wynne had a rough ride after 15 years, I think you're going to have a much rougher ride a lot quicker than that, if you go in the direction that this particular throne speech is going.

With that, Mr. Speaker, merci beaucoup.

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

Mr. Parm Gill: I'd like to inform the House that I will be splitting my time with the member from Brantford—Brant.

It is an absolute honour for me to be able to rise today for the first time in this House as the member for Milton. Let me tell you a bit about Milton, Mr. Speaker. It is one of the most diverse, vibrant and fastest-growing towns in the country. I would like to thank my constituents for

putting their trust in me and really giving me the honour of representing them in this House.

Mr. Speaker, who would have thought that a young boy who immigrated to this country at a very young age from a small village in Punjab, India, would one day go on to first serve as a member of Parliament in Ottawa and then be standing in this place as an MPP elected by the great people of Milton.

I must thank my mother, Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, who sacrificed so much after becoming a widow with the responsibility of having to raise four young children all by herself. We all know it's not an easy task to raise children with both parents at home, but having to raise four children as a single mother is a task by itself. I don't think we can ever repay her for the sacrifices she made for our family, for her kids. I just want to thank her. I'm glad she was able to join us today and be here for my first speech in this House.

I would also like to thank my siblings: my two brothers, Manjeet and Ranjit, and my sister, Karamjit, all of whom are older than me and have been role models for me growing up.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention another individual who is a very important part of my life and has been for over 20 years: my soul mate, my life partner, without whom I'm not sure where my family or I would be, and that is my wife, Amarpal. There are no words I can use to truly describe her and what she means to me and our children. All I will say is that I'm blessed to have her as a life partner and cannot thank her enough for everything she does and what she means to me and our three wonderful children: our daughter, Parmeet, and two sons, Daman and Raman.

Mr. Speaker, one thing most people might not understand is the kind of stress it puts on the family members of a person who puts their name forward for public office and the sacrifices they have to make in their lives. Believe me, during my time as I served as a member of Parliament in Ottawa and until this day, my family has had their fair share of stress and sacrifices that they have made for choices I made to get elected and be in public office.

I'm so blessed with an extended family and close friends and relatives, all of whom played an important role in getting me where I am today. I would like to recognize three of my close friends: Navneet Sethi, Amandeep Singh, Inderjit and their families.

Last, but not least, my campaign team, one of the most dedicated group of friends and volunteers who have worked so hard each and every day, taking time off from their work and away from their families, and in some extreme weather conditions: I would like to thank Lynn, Robert, Sue, Shawn, Devon, Gothan, Ian, Warren, Mike, Stella, Carolyn, Olga, John, Dan and Marco.

Now let's talk about the reasons we're all here and what we're going to do for the people of Ontario as a PC government. Our plan was clearly communicated with Ontarians during the election, and I'm glad they voted for a plan that will help put Ontario back on the right track.

By helping Ontarians by introducing initiatives such as scrapping the carbon tax and cap-and-trade, reducing gas prices by 10 cents per litre, cutting hydro rates by 12% for families, farmers and small businesses—this will have a huge impact, especially for those living in the rural part of my riding, in areas such as Nassagaweya, Moffat, Brookville, Campbellville, Kilbride and Lowville.

As I was going around and campaigning during the election, I got to speak to many, many residents in my riding, especially residents who live in the rural part. Many people may not know that they don't have the luxury of being able to heat their homes with natural gas, so they're dependent either on propane or, in most cases, electricity to heat their homes.

We all know the hydro prices have skyrocketed under the previous Liberal government, and a lot of these families have a hard time making ends meet. They have to choose between heating and eating.

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Since the election, as I've gone around now and met those people at community events, there is a sense of excitement. There is a sense that relief is on the way, and I can assure each and every single one of them that relief is on the way. Our Ontario PC government is going to do everything we can to deliver relief for them, including initiatives such as cutting income taxes by 20% for the middle-class bracket, saving an average family up to \$786 a year, and helping parents with child care by providing them with up to a 75% refundable tax credit for their children between the ages of zero and 15 years, and really respecting parents by giving them the choice of what kind of child care is best for their children.

As a proud father of three and uncle to nephews and nieces—and I obviously have friends who have kids—I can tell you that parents are the best decision-makers for their children. There's nothing more frustrating for parents than when government tries to dictate to them how their kids should be raised, where they should be sent and what they should be taught. So I'm really glad, Mr. Speaker, that we're moving in the right direction, providing relief for families and providing parents with a choice that they can make for their children.

We're helping small businesses by reducing the small business tax rate by 8.7%. I've got lots of businesses in my riding that are known as landmarks, such as Troy's Diner and Sargent Farms, which have been around for generations and that do a lot in the community. They help create jobs. They help local charities. These individuals and families put their equity—they take risks; they help create jobs. Small businesses are really the backbone of our economy—I'm sure every single member in this House would agree with me—and we need to do everything we can to support them. We need to help them thrive. We need to help them to prosper. We need to help them create more jobs and be more competitive, and not burden them with red tape and regulations.

Another area would be to help fill the skilled-trades gap by increasing access to apprenticeship and reforming

the Foreign Credential Recognition Program, which will help qualified immigrants who come to Ontario to be able to contribute to their fullest potential.

We all know individuals who have come to this country who are qualified and who are professionals, and there's nothing more frustrating than not being able to work in the area that they are qualified in, and having to work at mediocre jobs such as in convenience stores, gas stations, driving taxis and so forth. This is another area that our Ontario PC government is going to help address.

Another area is health care. I had the opportunity to visit a number of seniors' homes in my riding and talk with seniors—the kind of impact and the stress that it has put, under the previous Liberal government, on seniors. We're going to help build 15,000 long-term-care beds over five years, and 30,000 over 10 years, to help seniors who are waiting and who are on a waiting list for years and years. We're going to get moving on that.

Other initiatives, such as helping those in need by investing \$3.8 billion in mental health care, addiction and housing supports over 10 years—there is lots to do, Mr. Speaker.

I know I'm running out of time. I'd like to thank this House for allowing me the opportunity to speak today. I'm looking forward to many, many debates in this House in the near future. Thank you very much. I look forward to future opportunities, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing along, I recognize the member from Brantford–Brant.

Mr. Will Bouma: I'd like to start by congratulating the Speaker on his election.

I'd also like to thank my wife, Joni, for her support, as well as our five children, Lena, Titus, Elijah, Jack and Ella, some of whom could join us today, for their support through this entire period of time. It's been two years; it's been a long two years. I would also like to thank the voters and the campaign team, especially the hundreds of volunteers. I'm going to try to do my best to live up to their trust. I'm humbled to stand here today to respond to the speech from the throne. I'm also excited in my first speech to be able to talk about our plan for the people.

The speech from the throne laid out a plan that will help us realize the potential of this great province. I would like to talk about how the plan addresses the four key issues we talked about during our campaign in Brantford–Brant.

First was health care. In Brantford–Brant, like many communities across the province, we have a hospital system that's bursting at the seams. Front-line hospital staff are working hard, but they cannot overcome the structural problems that have led to hallway health care and long waits in the emergency room. One reason is the shortage of long-term-care beds. There are seniors in hospital beds who could have a better life and get the help they need if they could just move into long-term care. In Brantford–Brant we have 850 long-term-care beds, but only 20 open up each month. Meanwhile, hundreds of seniors are on waiting lists for a year or more. The government's commitment to fund 15,000

new beds over the next five years will give Brantford–Brant a long-term-care system that treats our seniors with the respect that they deserve. It will help our hospitals focus their attention on acute care.

I'm also encouraged by the promise to invest \$1.9 billion in mental health and addiction programs. This is long overdue. It will be particularly helpful in Brantford–Brant where, sadly, we have serious addiction issues that need to be addressed. The community has come together to develop a strategy but we will need support from the province in order to implement it.

The second issue that we talked about at doorsteps was making life more affordable. One of the nice things about living in Brantford–Brant is that it is one of the best places in Canada to buy a home—and that's not me saying that; that's MoneySense and Maclean's magazines who reported on this in April. House prices are lower than in the Hamilton-Toronto region, but our central location gives us access to that region's jobs, leisure activities and services. We'd like to keep our community affordable. We want to make sure it remains affordable for existing residents and people who want to move to our community.

When I talked to voters about affordability, the first thing they said was, "You have to do something about hydro rates," so I'm happy to see that our government intends to keep its pledge to cut rates by 12%. Eliminating the cap-and-trade program, cutting gasoline taxes, supporting child care costs and reducing income taxes will go a long way to keeping life more affordable in Brantford–Brant. I was particularly encouraged by the statement that "no dollar is better spent—than the dollar that is left in the pockets of the taxpayer."

I believe the role of government is to empower people and create a climate for growth and positive change—but then government needs to get out of the way and let people decide for themselves how they want to pursue their dreams.

We also have to think about ensuring that life is more affordable for the next generation. The massive debt we have today will translate into big tax increases and service cuts in the future. That's not fair to our children and our grandchildren. The best thing we can do is to run an efficient and effective government, providing people with the services that they need at a price that they can afford. As we bring our debt under control and reduce the amount of money we spend on interest, we will be able to invest in better services and supports for the most vulnerable in our society.

I'm happy to see that the government is taking a fine-tooth comb to government spending by calling a commission of inquiry. We talked about that with voters during the election. I said this promise reminded me of the Drummond report from 2012. Don Drummond gave the previous government a road map to cut costs, maintain services and increase government efficiency. Unfortunately, it became just another doorstop because it would have stifled the expensive and expansive plans of the government of the day. But we know that it is

possible to tackle our deficit. Other jurisdictions have found ways to climb out from under massive debt. With courage, careful thought and compassion, we can do it too.

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The third issue we talked about during the campaign was job creation. Brantford–Brant has come a long way from the dark days of a few decades ago when we suffered the job losses from our farm equipment industry and thousands of jobs going away. Now we have a balanced, growing economy. But memories are long, and we know what can happen when the economy turns down and businesses have to cut back. That's why it's so important to make it more affordable and easier to do business in Ontario. That's how we keep existing jobs and create new ones. The promises to reduce taxes, cut hydro rates, get rid of unnecessary regulations and fight foreign tariffs will ensure we're open for business and that we stay that way.

Finally, I want to talk about the fourth theme of our campaign: working together. We have an interesting tradition in our riding: Our MPP, MP, mayors and First Nations leaders don't really care about party identification and boundary lines. They're willing to work together for the good of all their communities. It even carries over to our election campaigns. Several times I heard people from outside of the riding who commented how civil and friendly our campaigns seemed to be. We fought hard but we stuck to the issues and stayed away from personal attacks and negativity. It is that way because of the work of those who came before us.

In particular, I want to thank our former member and your former Speaker, Dave Levac, for helping to maintain that standard. Dave and our MP, Phil McColeman, developed a strong and productive relationship for the good of all. When I decided to run for this position, I made it my goal to learn from Dave and Phil and to make sure that we carry on that grand tradition of working together. So I was delighted to hear the Lieutenant Governor say on Thursday "that when Ontarians work together, there is no challenge that cannot be overcome." I agree. That's why I'm here. That's why all of us are here: to work together on behalf of all Ontarians.

You know, I'm just a Dutch immigrant kid who grew up on a dairy farm in southwestern Ontario. Now I get to sit here and help build a better, stronger province for us and for our children. That's special. That's how great Ontario is. I want to thank you for the opportunity to talk about the exciting plans of our new government and how we plan to make life better for the people.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to start by thanking the people of Hamilton Mountain for their trust in me and sending me back to the Legislature. It's one of the proudest moments of my life that I've had, to be able to fight for the people of Ontario, and being in this place is the right place to do that. I look forward to the next four years and the work that we have ahead of us.

Congratulations to the member from Milton and the member from Brantford–Brant on their inaugural speeches. I welcome them to the Legislature. Their brief moments on the throne speech, which we heard last week—you know, New Democrats have differing opinions on the way that we see things being done here. Where they think that they can cancel cap-and-trade, we see that as revenue loss; we see that as polluters being able to get away with things that hurt our environment and do not allow a safe space for our children to be able to grow up with fresh air. We see those as movements backwards instead of moving Ontario forward.

When they talk about freezing hiring and wage freezes throughout our public sector, we see that as public service cuts. We see that as cuts to services where we know that families are struggling.

A thing that I was sorry not to see in the throne speech was mention of people with disabilities. Where were they throughout the throne speech? When the government talks about how they're here for the people, I hope they're going to be here for all people of this province, especially our most vulnerable, when we know that we're in times where families are struggling further and further each and every day to be able to take care of their loved ones. This throne speech totally missed that boat.

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

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): There we go. Okay. We're just kind of finding our way. All right, I'm going to recognize the member from Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte.

Mr. Doug Downey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The member indicates that we have differing opinions. But we have the same facts. The facts are that we have people in hallways in health care and we have to deal with that. And the fact is that the cap-and-trade is just a cash grab and was a slush fund for the previous government. We have to deal with these things. We have to fix health care. We have to deal with the excess taxation on our small businesses and on every consumer in Ontario. We have to reduce taxes. We have to fix hydro. We have to fix hydro by lowering costs and we have to fix the leadership of Hydro. There's absolutely no question about these things.

So although there are differing opinions on some of the solutions, the facts remain the same: We have a problem in health care; we have a problem in hydro; we have a problem with several grabs for cash that are affecting every single industry. Gas taxes are high. Every input cost—the minimum wage was going up. There are all sorts of reasons why small businesses are struggling. It's fairly obvious to me, when I talk to people in my riding and they come to me and they say, "I'm this close to closing down because I just don't think we can do it anymore. We're employing people, or we're a family business, and there's just no way that we can survive with the current environment." So we're fixing that.

The plan for the people addresses all these things. The plan for the people addresses the cap-and-trade cash grab.

The plan for the people makes sure that service delivery is done properly in health care—and we're going to do it by talking to front-line workers. The front-line workers know how the system works. They know where the soft spots are and they know where the waste is that isn't producing benefit for anybody.

This is the job that we're tasked with. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for a chance to address some of them. These are our priorities. As you can tell, we've already gotten to work, and there's more to come.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am also glad to be able to return to this fine Legislature on behalf of the people from Oshawa, and I'm very glad to be able to welcome those who have given their inaugural speeches to this fine Legislature. I find it also special to stand and rise as the still-serving critic for citizenship and immigration on behalf of the NDP caucus, though that ministry no longer exists, which is disappointing. I thought I would mention that in response to the remarks from the members.

The member from Milton: I appreciate what he was saying on behalf of his community. One of the concerns, as he said, that will be a priority for this PC government is immigrants to Canada who are not able to work in their fields, who are not able to not just achieve their potential but to actually use their skill set. That was something that was a priority of the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, that actually part of their mandate was to address that skills gap. So what will happen now that that has been erased? I challenge this government to come up with an answer for that.

But also we heard from both members who spoke—the member from Brantford–Brant—about long-term care. I think everyone in this Legislature is going to be talking about the need to address long-term care. We all heard it at the doors. Of course, I'm glad to be from Oshawa, but I'm not glad that our community has the longest waiting list when it comes to long-term-care beds. I will argue that it's not as simple as just making space for more people and more beds; we have to ensure that they have the dignity and the care.

The NDP had introduced legislation, and I look forward to continuing to champion, for minimum hours, minimum levels of care. The four hours of hands-on care that we had championed: People deserve that dignity and we all need to fight for that, regardless of stripes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and welcome to the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments. The member from Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to see you in the chair again. You always make life quite interesting in the Legislature. I appreciate that. That's great.

I'd like to offer comments on one of the points that our government is looking forward to impressing upon those who gave us the honour to be in this place: working

for the people. Too often we've seen, in the last six years and eight months or so since I've been here, that it's the people working for the government, and that's not the way it should be. Our policies should be to work for the people and help their lives improve, or at least stay the same.

One of the things I'd like to talk about is an issue that happened in Perth–Wellington. I think it ties in with what the speakers from Milton and Brantford–Brant were talking about. We almost lost a 90-bed long-term-care facility in our area, just west of Stratford, called Hillside Manor. The government and the bureaucrats were using a system that didn't seem to be working. We pointed that out to them. It's a ratio of so many beds per 1,000 people aged 75. What it does is dictate how many beds you should have in the riding.

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I have a number of long-term-care facilities in the riding of Perth–Wellington, as I'm sure all of us do. They all have very long waiting lists for people to get in. It's unprecedented. They say they've never had lists this long. But the baby boomers are coming. They're here and they are going to start using these things. The government seems to be working against the people in these types of situations. So I think that's just a case—we were able to keep it in Perth county, and we were so glad that happened.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

Now I return to the member from Brantford–Brant for final comments.

Mr. Will Bouma: I would like to thank the members from Barrie–Springwater–Oro-Medonte, Hamilton Mountain, Oshawa and Perth–Wellington.

I find it unfortunate that the opposition seems to forget that a few weeks ago, the people of Ontario gave us a clear mandate to do everything that we're doing right now. That's why, with that mandate, we are listening to the people of Ontario. We are going to lower hydro rates. We are going to hold government accountable. We are going to lower gas prices. We will govern for the people.

I heard at the doors numerous examples of what we're going to do. People had good drug coverage with private plans. Then when OHIP+ came in, they lost that and they ended up spending hundreds of dollars out of pocket. So returning to a place where private insurance is the first line of defence and where OHIP+ will fill in the gaps—

Mr. Bill Walker: Makes sense.

Mr. Will Bouma: —makes sense. Absolutely.

The other thing that we really need is investments in mental health. We've had families suffer from those things. I've seen a lot of people suffer from those things. As a first responder myself, I often have those conversations with police officers and firefighters. I say, "Do you see what I see?" We need those investments. There are so many people who are suffering and unable to work, and we just don't have those supports there. For us to be investing \$1.9 billion into mental health I think sends a loud and clear message to the people of Ontario that we

are here, we are listening and we will govern for the people.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure for me to stand in my place in this Legislature. Like many other members, I'd like to thank my family: my husband, Dale, and my children, Aidan and Claire. My parents are watching, Allan and Sheila Wood from Peterborough. They have a new MPP, Mr. Smith, here. I just want to tell you they watch all the time, and they'll be calling you, I'm sure. They're very engaged. In fact, my mom is running for municipal council. It sort of runs in the family. If you want to make the world a better place, you put your name on a ballot and you try to change the world.

I'm also really pleased to be joined—for six years I have been here in this Legislature, and I have been coming by myself, but now I have a friend. I have Laura Mae Lindo from Kitchener Centre. She won the seat in this last election. We are like the super duo. That's what they're calling us; I don't know if you knew that. But it's a pleasure to serve with her and it's also nice to have some company, I must say.

It's really interesting. The previous speaker commented on this vast majority that this Conservative government has. I want to remind the members in this Legislature that because of our flawed electoral system, you really got 40% of the people in this province. Actually, it's very important to remember that, because 60% you did not. As you move forward, it's worth remembering that you actually don't have this super majority.

The hubris and the arrogance that were conveyed in the throne speech really caught my eye. In fact, I heard from various constituents in Waterloo that the tone of this throne speech was so very different from other governments—from other Liberal governments, from other PC governments. It was the language, actually, that was used. Quite honestly, I will say that I thought it was very difficult for the LG, as someone who believes in climate change and who has been an advocate for green energy and the green movement, to have to announce the end of cap-and-trade.

The revenue from cap-and-trade, as many of you may or may not know, was going into our local economies. It was going into our schools. It was going into local businesses and homes. I'm the critic for economic development—and research and innovation, and early learning and care, and LGBTQ for now. Because that money was actually being reinvested into the community, it was strengthening local economies. I'm sure that members across this province have heard from businesses who had really thought—because climate change is real and because it requires a response, it requires a plan, it requires strategy. Those businesses were genuinely concerned that the government—really, as soon as Premier Ford was elected, he just took his hand and went across the desk without thinking of the consequences of ending a program where there was a retrofitting component

which actually had three really good benefits, Mr. Speaker.

One is that you had to have a legitimate window installer or a legitimate furnace inspector—someone from REEP, for instance. These were people who were licensed who were doing the work in our homes, in our schools, on our farms. So there was an element of consumer protection. You didn't have someone who was not qualified. They were qualified to do the work, and they were hired to do the work, and then there was obviously a rebate for doing that work to the consumer. So there was a consumer protection perspective.

The underground economy in this province is a huge issue. The Conservatives on that side who used to be on this side used to share this concern for many years, especially when I was finance critic. That is lost revenue to fix our health care, to fix our education system, to invest in local economies. That is lost revenue because now that there's no plan in place, it goes underground. Then, of course, there is the local economy perspective, which addresses the lost revenue to this place, to the provincial coffers, the consumer protection component, and of course the underground economy.

As the Premier sort of just wiped off the desk, there was nothing in place to protect consumers in the province of Ontario. I don't believe that's in the best interests of our local communities. These are very real concerns. We've been hearing about these concerns now for six years.

I don't think—in fact, I know that it doesn't lend itself to creating an environment and a culture where economic confidence is strengthened. What businesses have said to me is, "What's up next? What is he going to do next? We weren't consulted. There was no warning. There was no prior notice that he was going to cancel everything and not put anything in place." And that actually scares businesses away.

We already had this economy, as the Auditor General had identified, where select businesses were getting the royal handshake and were accessing grants through the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund or the Economic Development Fund or the Rural Economic Development Fund. There was money already being siphoned to specific businesses, which compromised the confidence in our economy. And then you have a very rash decision in this place to end a program which had a benefit. It may not have been a perfect program, but cap-and-trade is also very different from the language that the Conservatives use around carbon taxes.

There has to be a cost to polluting in the province of Ontario. There has to be a cost. There has to be a deterrent from that kind of behaviour. Right now, we are one of the only jurisdictions that has no plan. Our only plan is that we're going to put aside \$30 million and go to court. So right now the lawyers in the province of Ontario are very happy. I mean, is this the job creation strategy that this government is thinking about investing in?

There also is a pattern of behaviour which already is alarming, Mr. Speaker, and our leader, Andrea Horwath,

referenced it earlier: these backroom, off-the-radar decisions that are being made. The throne speech actually talks about the importance of this chamber belonging to the people of this province, and that, therefore, this chamber lends itself to an openness and transparency of decision-making. That is why the debate is so important.

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I will also reference that that is how legislation should be crafted. One of the reasons that this Premier has been so effective, if you will, in destroying the last legislative session is that the Liberals left so much to the regulations. We didn't even get a chance to debate it. So the public is left out of the discourse of our own democracy—and this on our first day in this Legislature, Mr. Speaker. The throne speech talks about who we are here for, and yet the decisions are being made off the grid—no pun intended; it just happened.

I think the most shocking moment is that I just never thought I would hear such language in a throne speech in 2018. Quoting from the throne speech: “You can ... count on your government to respect parents, teachers and students by getting back to basics and replacing failed ideological experiments in the classroom.” This is 2018. There is so much research and evidence to demonstrate that when you inform students of their rights, of the privileges that they have with their own body, with their ability to turn away an aggressive act of sexual assault—when you inform them, when you pass on that knowledge to them, you empower them. Why would any government in 2018 seek to stop that transfer of knowledge to our youth? It makes no sense.

I will say, though, that it looks like we are being very successful already as an official opposition, because the minister today—while there's nothing in writing and we can't verify, the pressure seems to be working. We are going to keep up the pressure, Mr. Speaker, because we have to talk about consent; we have to talk about how families look in the province of Ontario; we have to talk about gender equality. These are things that must happen. In 1998, the age of consent was 14. It is now 16, as it should be. You can't roll back the curriculum and think that there won't be consequences—just like the Premier wiped off the desk and ended cap-and-trade without a plan.

You can see, genuinely, why we as legislators are concerned with this pattern of behaviour, and I think that we are not alone. I think that people who did not vote for this government share our concerns, and I think even the people who did vote for this government have concerns around compromising the economic confidence in this province. If you want to talk about shared prosperity, then we have to ensure that the conditions for investment are there. When governments act in an erratic manner, in an erratic way, without consultation, in a select group of a circle of people—even their own minister today wasn't aware of all the consequences of reversing the police act, that took two years to consult.

I have never seen that in this House. What it does is suggest that what happens in the Premier's office

happens in the Premier's office. I would like to respectfully remind the Premier that he does not work for Ford Nation. He works for the people of this province.

Perhaps that will be the theme of this Legislature. I personally hope that it isn't, because a lot of damage has been done to this province—a lot of damage.

As the MPP for Waterloo, I have been working on a case for almost a year to have Don Deighton, who is 83 years old and has been married for 65 years to Patricia—Patricia is in a long-term-care home. I cannot get Don Deighton into that long-term-care home with his wife. They have been married for 65 years. If you can be married for 65 years, someone should give you a medal. Someone should show you some respect. Someone should ensure that you can spend the last years of your lives together.

Despite the rhetoric that we heard during the provincial election, I think that the people of this province really did send a very strong message to this place that they did not approve of the last government's pattern of making decisions—which are very similar to the decisions that this Premier has made—in putting private interests ahead of public interests. They have no tolerance for that, and they shouldn't have to tolerate it.

If you are like me, at the doors you saw the anger that people had. People are viciously angry at a Legislature where they see their true principles, their true values and their priorities were not reflected. I can tell you that cancelling a wind farm as one of the first legislative actions, with a price tag of \$100 million in punishment—a minimum of \$100 million—is not going to fare well for you guys in your own ridings. I didn't hear on the doorstep in Waterloo, “I need that wind farm cancelled in Prince Edward county. And by the way, go to court and let them fight this Ontario government for the next four years.” I heard, “Make sure that every dollar that you invest makes our lives better.” How is cancelling a wind farm going to do that, Mr. Speaker? It really makes no sense.

This morning, I asked the Premier a question about one of the first things that he took on, which was to freeze public sector hiring. It sounds good. It's a great sound bite. It sounds tough. But when I start thinking about it and I look at the lens of how that will impact the people who were elected to serve in this place, I say to myself, “What happens to those 175 workplace safety inspectors who were supposed to make sure that the minimum wage was actually being rolled out effectively?” Temporary workers in factories, who are primarily racialized in this city and across this province: How are their rights being enforced if there isn't any protection for them?

I have this one article that I always reference, and it won't be the last time you hear me reference it. It was by an undercover reporter, Sara Mojtehdzadeh—I know I said that wrong—and Brendan Kennedy. She went undercover because this young woman, Amina Diaby, who was wearing a hijab—it got stuck in a factory belt because she was not appropriately trained. She was not

appropriately supervised. There was nobody overseeing this factory, which was paying people under the table because people are so desperate for work. This factory did receive government money, though. This is why the media is so important, because they tell these stories.

I think about this young woman a lot, because she was working in this factory to make a better life for herself. She was a student. This factory had received federal and provincial funding. In fact, they had been held up as, “Isn’t it great that we give these companies money?” But there was no accountability. You’ll remember this, my fellow economic development critic. There was no oversight, there was no accountability and the Ministry of Labour had very few tools to actually ensure that the legislation was being carried out, the same as working at heights.

I wonder: When Mr. Ford freezes hiring in the public sector, he fundamentally forgets that the public sector is here to perform public services. They say that they’re not going to affect teachers and they’re not going to affect nurses. In fact, they are cutting a program which holds nurses here in the province of Ontario. We train nurses in this province, we need nurses in this province, but we lose them because they can’t find full-time work. This may be a hangover of the five-year freeze on hospital funding, but there is time to fix it, and that program holds nurses here. So if we’re going to invest in people and we’re going to train them, let’s keep them in Ontario and help them be successful and reach their potential for the people of the province and not go down to the States.

This public sector wage freeze, I know, sounds good: “As well as that extra dollar in the pocket, we want tax dollars in your pockets.”

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Well, you can have tax dollars in your pockets but you will not find a child care space in this province because two out of every 10 parents are still looking for quality, affordable child care. And you know who that disproportionately affects? Women; 28% of the women in this province only work part-time because they can’t find child care. They cannot find quality child care. It makes no financial sense for them to go out into the workforce, to put their degrees into play. So you can say, “Here’s some money in your pocket,” but if there are no child care spaces for parents to actually invest in, so that their children are safe and not in a home daycare with 26 other kids, one of whom got left in a car, Mr. Speaker—we are fundamentally talking about how you value, how you see public services.

And it is true that we see government very differently. We see that government should serve the people. The people in this province have been neglected on so many files, but what I did not see reflected in that throne speech was the need to invest in health care. Even the \$1.9 billion that is cited for mental health: Listen, if you’re cutting off revenue streams, you’re not going to have that \$1.9 billion for mental health care. You’re not going to have the \$800 million that is needed to address the autism wait-list in this province.

There is fundamentally a contradiction from this government. They say they’re for the people but I feel that sometimes they are only for some people. I’m thinking of Amina’s rights as an immigrant worker in the province of Ontario who wanted to contribute to the economy, who was going to school, who wanted to make a better life in this province. And yet, if you freeze the public sector hiring, just *carte blanche*, then you are fundamentally doing a disservice to the people of this province.

I want to end by saying the Ford government has said that they are the first government for the people. I have to imagine all of those Premiers, Conservative, Liberal—even Bob Rae was there at the swearing-in. How insulting that would be that you have declared yourself the first government of the people? Let me remind the people who were elected in this place: We all have a shared responsibility for the people and the citizens in our ridings. Calling yourself the first government of the people suggests a level of arrogance and entitlement and hubris which does not bode well for us working together.

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

Mr. Ross Romano: I firstly want to thank the member from Waterloo for her comments, her concluding comments, where she indicated that—I gather from the nature of your comments that you want to work together. It’s important that we work together. But working together requires that we have an open mind with respect to that entire concept of working together for the people.

Now, the member is absolutely correct. People are angry in this province. People were angry in this province. I was elected just a year ago and when I was elected into this House, I heard the now official opposition, then the third party, say that we didn’t have a plan over and over and over again. Through the campaign I heard that we didn’t have a plan. Now here we are today and I’m hearing that we don’t have a plan. Yet 2,326,632 people disagreed with you and they thought we had a great plan, and I am proud that we are moving forward on our plan and that we are doing the things we’re doing and that we are here in the summer months following through with our plan and showing the people of Ontario that we are in fact for the people. We are a government for the people and we will make the necessary changes that this community, this province need.

So if you really want to work together, you will work with the people and you will consider the fact that 2,326,632 people agreed with what we’re proposing. Those people want to see the changes that we are imposing in this province. They want to see a government that actually does something. And we are actually doing something. We are moving in the right direction to improving the disastrous policies that were created by the Liberals, and the NDP who propped up those policies for the last 15 years. I am proud to be moving forward in that regard.

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I’d like to start by firstly thanking the residents and constituents of Brampton East for

giving me this opportunity to represent them and be their voice.

My colleague from Waterloo outlined really, really important points around how the Ford government had described how they were going to make life more affordable and easier for Ontarians. But I have yet to hear the Ford government mention one of the biggest issues in my riding, which is auto insurance. Brampton East residents pay some of the highest auto insurance in this country. The auto insurance companies have been seeing record profits. We've seen reports coming out where they have overcharged Ontarians \$5 billion. And yet we see an absence of this issue being addressed by the Ford government. I can give numerous examples of residents from my riding who, upon leaving Brampton, have seen as much as a 50% decrease in their premiums, rates going from \$300 a month down to \$150 a month or even less. It should not be a punishment to live in Brampton.

This is often—in some situations, in some households—the difference between paying a mortgage and paying car insurance. So what we're seeing is this climate of life getting harder and harder and these big insurance companies making more and more profit, but we need to ensure that government is strong enough and brave enough to stand up against these huge corporations.

I don't see how this is fair, that we have a situation in which Ontarians are being discriminated against, that we're paying some of the highest rates in this country, and I think we need to do something to address this point, to make life more affordable and ensure that Ontarians are being put first.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I just wanted to thank the member for his comments and to point out the fact that what we campaigned on, our five key points, are actually non-partisan, when you think about it. Those are points that really are for the people. Everyone wants lower hydro rates. Everyone wants a responsible, accountable government, and everyone wants lower taxes. When it comes to health care, of course, everyone wants, again, better-quality service and to end hallway health care.

Really, I look forward to working with all of the members here to ensure that we are working for the people and that we are doing what is right, because these are non-partisan issues that are affecting every single Ontarian, and we need to do something about it.

Furthermore, with respect to the comments on child care, quite frankly, a lot of people that I spoke with did not want subsidized child care. We already have classrooms that are overflowing with students. Teachers are overburdened, and the last thing we need is government-funded child care facilities. We need to respect taxpayers. We need to respect small-business owners, many of whom are in fact stay-at-home moms or stay-at-home dads or with family businesses run from their homes. Many of those people actually reached out to me and were concerned, because with the Liberal plan that was going to be put in place, they would lose their business and they would lose money.

What we are doing to reduce the shortage is that by promoting businesses and promoting the growth of small business, we are increasing that opportunity to create more child care spaces for those parents who need them. The solution is always to respect taxpayers, respect people. Give parents the choice for where they want to go.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to commend the member from Waterloo, who gave a very great oversight in regard to what was missing, what could have been part of this government's initial throne speech.

I do want to give a shout-out to Virginia Pelletier. I met her quite some time ago, a couple of years ago. We've established a great relationship. She's an elder. We were at the powwow in Sagamok this weekend. She made me this beautiful medallion that I'm very proud to wear. But among her and a few of the other elders, something that they were very open and forthcoming in regard to telling me is, "Where was this government in regards to reconciliation in this throne speech?" What was evident to them is that this government was silent. You were silent on reconciliation, you were silent on First Nations issues, you were silent on Métis issues and you were silent on Indigenous matters—not a word, zero, nothing. That's the priority of this government that you're showing. Coming from northern Ontario and a riding that has many First Nations communities, that was very telling to many of the people who were in my riding.

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Also what was telling is in regard to the changes that you're bringing to the curriculum. Now, I'm happy and I'm proud to say that some of the school boards and the teachers in my area are going to go ahead and teach children what they need to learn in their schools, are going to do it regardless of the decision that this government is making. They are being responsible not only to their communities but to their children. We as parents have to do better than what this government is doing by taking us back instead of learning from our mistakes.

I have seen too many children in my riding who have lost and have made the ultimate decision as far as taking their lives away. Too many families have suffered. Too many communities continue to suffer, and it's unfortunate that your silence is the priority that this government is showing. Shame on you.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I want to thank the members from Sault Ste. Marie, Brampton East, Carleton and Algoma-Manitoulin.

I have to say to the member for Sault Ste. Marie that it's hard for us to work with you when you're behind closed doors. I mean, if we're not part of the conversation and we're not part of the meeting, it's hard to actually collaborate. So maybe take that back and see if

there's something—because otherwise it's going to be a long four years. It is. It's already a long four years, and this is day one. I'm telling you right now.

I want to say that I think it's really interesting, this comment on child care, that people do not care about investing in early learning and care. It runs counter to everything that we know in this province and in this country. Even if you don't accept that there is a public good attached to taking care of children from zero to 4.8 before they go to school, even if you don't accept that it's a public service that we should be investing in, what about the economic driver? Because if 28% of women in this province—and I'm sure that's going to go up—only work part-time, think of the lost revenue. Think of the lost opportunities. Think of the lost income. We fundamentally right now, slap down, disagree on child care. We believe child care is an investment for the economy, for women. Child care stocks are traded on the Toronto Stock Exchange. That's the Liberal record, that they privatized it. That is not a record to be proud of; I can tell you that, Mr. Speaker.

I think that if this government is going to say that they are the government of respect, then that respect needs to be inclusive of everyone. That means the LGBTQ community and that means Indigenous people in this province. We're going to hold you to account on that front.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the member from Ottawa West–Nepean.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will let you know that I'm going to be splitting my time with the member from Oakville.

I suppose the Speaker who got elected is not here, but I would like to begin by congratulating him on his election to this important role in Parliament. I have no doubt that our new Speaker will serve this new role with dignity and aplomb in moderating the spirited debates that are yet to come, and it's fantastic that he has wonderful deputies to support him.

C'est un grand honneur d'avoir l'opportunité aujourd'hui pour me présenter comme nouveau député pour des peuples d'Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean.

In 1955, my grandparents Barbara and Len Roberts immigrated from Britain and settled in Nepean on a little road called Epworth. They could have chosen anywhere in the world to go to, but they chose Nepean. They chose Nepean because it is a community that is founded on the core values of family, respect for tradition and hard work. These are the values that my grandparents have passed down through the generations to me, and they're the values that continue to be fundamental to the great riding that I am privileged now to serve.

Ottawa West–Nepean is home to the largest and most vibrant seniors population in all of Ontario. In coffee shops, libraries and tennis clubs across the riding, these seniors form the bedrock of our riding by continuing to provide us with their wisdom and their lessons learned.

It is also a riding that is incredibly diverse. We have very large Italian and Chinese populations, and we are

also home to the largest Jewish community between Montreal and Toronto.

But regardless of race, religion or creed, all of these communities are bound together by a shared love of family and a commitment to working hard to get ahead. I am honoured that these people have put their faith in me to defend and uphold these values here at Queen's Park. I don't intend to let them down.

These values were also fundamental to the speech from the throne that was delivered last week and which outlined Premier Ford's plan to build an Ontario for the people. It was a bold plan that commits our government to taking quick action on a number of key priorities, including:

(1) getting our finances under control so that we aren't leaving the burden of debt to our children and grandchildren;

(2) putting more money back in the pockets of hard-working Ontario families by lowering gas prices and taxes and cutting hydro rates; and

(3) supporting the most vulnerable in our communities through targeted investments to support individuals with mental health issues and disabilities.

Je suis fier d'être ici aujourd'hui comme membre de cette équipe qui va implémenter ce plan ambitieux.

My political journey here today has not been an easy one. There have been many roadblocks along the way, but my resolve has never wavered.

As many in this House know, Mr. Speaker, I got involved in politics because of my younger brother, Dillon. Dillon is the most influential person in my life. He loves potato chips and Barney the dinosaur, and he swims like a fish. Dillon also has autism, a severe developmental delay, and suffers from epilepsy.

Growing up with a younger brother with special needs, my family faced a lot of challenges in fighting to get increased support from the government. When I was 15, my brother went through a particularly trying time during which he was either constantly having severe behavioural issues or constantly suffering from seizures. He was being sent home from school on an almost daily basis. My parents and I were having to take months on end off from work and studies to help take care of him. The doctors at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, our lifeline throughout this ordeal, were telling us that my brother needed to be placed in a residential care home where he could receive the 24/7 care he needed, to get his medications balanced and his health under control. Unfortunately, the price tag for this was a staggering \$85,000 per year, a cost that no family could ever afford.

I remember one night I was sitting in my bedroom, trying to catch up on studies, and my brother was having a terrible tantrum in the room next door. It was heartbreaking because he was so angry and upset, and yet we didn't understand why. Suddenly, there was this big crash, and I looked over at my wall and there was a foot sticking through the wall. My brother, in a fit of rage, had kicked a hole from his bedroom into mine.

I knew that at that point, we were close to hitting rock bottom. The walls were literally coming down around me.

Exhausted and in crisis, my father and I began researching ways that we could get increased support, and we discovered a provincial social services board that you could present to, to get emergency funding. I asked my parents if I could present on behalf of our family, and they agreed. It was the most important presentation of my entire life. I am proud to report that it was also my most successful.

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My brother received the emergency funding that he needed. Our family was saved. But even though my brother, my parents and I are doing much better now, I began to hear about other families who were going through the same crisis, such as the Telfords. Their stories were coming up in the news time and time again. Families were in crisis, and the government wasn't doing their part to provide support.

And so I decided that I needed to do something. I decided I would get involved in politics. I found in the PC Party a party that reflected my beliefs of fiscal responsibility and social compassion. It was a party that had champions for issues that I was passionate in, like the late Jim Flaherty; Mike Lake, federal MP; John Tory; and Christine Elliott. Since that time, I have dedicated myself to fighting on behalf of families like mine at all levels of government.

On election night, June 7, I mounted the stage shortly after midnight when the results of my close election were announced. My brother had been with me until just about 10 p.m., when he had to finally head home to go to bed. As I got on the stage, I looked directly into the cameras pointed at me and I made a solemn promise. I committed to the individuals with autism and their families across this province that they would have a champion here in Queen's Park. I don't intend to let my brother down, nor any of them.

Our new Premier has taken this issue seriously. The all-star team that he has assembled around him includes many individuals who are also passionate about this issue, including the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Community and Social Services, the parliamentary secretary for children and autism, and the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. Together, we are going to work to fight for those families that are in crisis.

The challenges that face us, moving forward, are broad in scope and deep in difficulty. In order to get our provincial finances under control, we will need not only to find efficiencies in our system, but we will need to ask the question of every single dollar that is spent: Is this something that we want, or is this something that we need? We can't afford to be any less diligent. We must ensure that we are managing our finances so that we can maximize sustainable support to the most vulnerable in our communities: individuals with disabilities, seniors in desperate need of long-term care, and patients that have been waiting far too long in hospital hallways for treatments.

Make no mistake: This is possible. I know it because I lived through it under the mentorship of the late Jim Flaherty, the former federal and provincial Minister of Finance. Jim not only made the tough decisions to return us to balance after going through the greatest economic depression since the Great Depression, but he did so while also leaving a legacy of record support for vulnerable communities and the disabled.

I have full confidence in this government and in the Premier to make these difficult decisions, and I look forward to working with them to fight on behalf of my constituents, on behalf of families in crisis and on behalf of my brother.

Jim Flaherty once remarked that public service was the most satisfying and personally enriching career that you will ever find. He then issued a challenge for young Canadians to answer the call. Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to rise in this chamber to answer that challenge.

Nous avons beaucoup de travail difficile devant nous, mais je suis fier d'avoir ce privilège distingué et je suis certain que, ensemble, nous pourrions surmonter tous nos défis.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I now recognize the member from Oakville.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and fellow members of the assembly and guests.

I would like to start off by congratulating the new Speaker for his recent election to this very important position. I know that with his long-term service and parliamentary knowledge, he will do a very great job in this and serve this assembly well.

I am pleased to offer my congratulations to all new and returning members of the 42nd Parliament. I know every one of us is here to represent our constituencies. I would also like to thank and acknowledge the former member from Oakville, Mr. Kevin Flynn, for his 15 years of service in the Legislature, most recently as Minister of Labour.

Of course, I would not be here without the support of my family and volunteers, so I would like to sincerely thank all of them for their hard work over the last year.

Finally, I would like to thank all the people of Oakville for their support. I am here to serve them.

Today I have the privilege of making my inaugural speech to this assembly. I am humbled by the ways in which our work will influence the lives of our communities and the people of Ontario. Recently, I was told of the significance of the carved statues of an owl and an eagle above our heads in this chamber, the eagle on this side and the owl on this side. The eagle is a reminder to the members who sit on the opposition benches of their duty to be vigilant in monitoring the government. The owl is a reminder to members on the government benches to be wise, listen carefully and always act in the best interests of the people. I find this a very helpful reminder of our roles in this chamber.

Today I would like to share a little bit about the town of Oakville, which I represent, who I am, what motivated

me for public service and the future I envision for Ontario.

Oakville is a beautiful lakeside community that was originally inhabited by the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation. The Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada purchased land in 1805, and the town of Oakville was founded in 1807 by William Chisholm, who coincidentally served in the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada. Oakville became known for ship building and basket weaving.

Today, Oakville has grown to be a community of approximately 200,000 people, with diversified industries and companies, including Ford Canada's head office and assembly line for the Ford Edge and Lincoln MKX; Siemens Canada's head office; a major manufacturing facility for UTC Aerospace, which manufactures landing gear for many Boeing and Airbus aircraft; and The Weather Network. We are also home to Sheridan College, which has graduated many extraordinary alumni in diverse areas such as computer animation, business, high technology and the arts. In fact, the Broadway musical *Come From Away* was incubated in Sheridan's Oakville campus.

Oakville once again will host the Canadian Open at our beautiful Glen Abbey golf course later this month. Glen Abbey has hosted more Canadian Opens than any other golf course.

Oakville is also home to many organizations whose goal is to improve the greater community. The town is home to Kerr Street Mission, which focuses on providing essential programs for people in need; the Lions Foundation dog guide school, which is the largest of its kind in Canada; and ArtHouse, which supports access to the arts for children and youth in need.

Here are some interesting facts about Oakville:

Oakville has over 1,300 acres of parkland and over 140 kilometres of trails.

The TV show *Suits* has been filmed in Oakville.

Oakville has chosen to remain a town, even though the population of 200,000 would normally be classified as a city.

Oakville attracts over 1.4 million tourists annually.

The Oakville Soccer Club and Oakville Crusaders Rugby Club are the largest soccer and rugby clubs in North America.

I invite each and every member of this chamber to visit our beautiful lakeside town. I would be honoured to show you around.

In terms of my personal background, I was born and raised in neighbouring Mississauga. I'm married to my wife, Najia, and I am the proud father of four daughters, two sets of identical twin girls: Monica, Michelle, Farah and Sophia. I attended the University of Western Ontario and studied political science. I was involved in youth politics many years ago, before focusing my efforts in the private sector. I spent 20 years in the private sector, most of that time as a business builder and a partner in two independent Canadian asset management firms.

Many people have asked me what motivated me to run for public service. My answer to that is easy: I love this

great country and great province that we live in, and I know we are not realizing our potential here in Ontario. Ontario used to be the economic engine of Canada. Today, we are the caboose. Ontario now has higher unemployment than Quebec for the first time in my lifetime, and we have a lower-than-average per capita income in Canada. We have more debt than any sub-national government in the world, and our credit rating has been downgraded yet again.

Ontario has among the highest hydro costs in North America, and as a result people are choosing between heating and eating, and businesses are moving elsewhere. Ontario has over 380,000 regulations, more than any jurisdiction in Canada. As a result, entrepreneurs don't want to open businesses here anymore. And of course, Ontario has some of the longest wait times for patients in Canada, and we have long waiting lists for older folks trying to enter long-term-care facilities. We can do better here in Ontario.

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There are many people who have inspired me over the years. I've been inspired by my family members, such as my parents, Bill and Diane, who taught me good values and work ethics, and my in-laws, Dr. Ahmed and Zahida Mahmood, who immigrated to Canada, settling in a small mining town in northern Quebec. My father-in-law worked hard—from landed immigrant, to be one of the premier scientists at the Canadian Space Agency.

I have been inspired by many public figures, such as Winston Churchill, who met adversity with steadfast leadership. I have also been inspired by a lesser-known public figure, whose name is Oseola McCarty. Oseola was a wonderful woman, born in 1908 and raised in poverty in rural Mississippi. She had very little formal education, and worked cleaning and laundering clothes for residents in her small town. Oseola rarely left town, had no children and led a very simple life. In her late eighties, she realized that she was approaching the end of her life, and decided to leave her savings to help fund poor students to attend university. She had accumulated over \$250,000 over the years.

When the media found out about Oseola's generosity, the story made major headlines around the world. She carried the torch at the Atlanta Olympics, and she was given the presidential medal by Bill Clinton. Her story touched so many people. She motivated hundreds of people to give hundreds of thousands of dollars to charity. Ted Turner announced he was donating \$1 billion to children's charities as a result of Oseola's inspiration.

The point of this story is that everybody in this chamber, everyone in this great province of Ontario, can be a leader and impact the lives of others in a positive way. Great leaders make the right decisions not based on short-term popularity or polls in politics or the latest quarterly earnings reports in business, but based on what is right for the people and their societies and organizations over the long term.

Mr. Speaker, the throne speech delivered here last week in this House has laid the groundwork to start the

process of ensuring that Ontario returns to be the economic engine of Canada once again. I'm excited to be part of a government, led by Premier Ford, which will focus on:

- making life more affordable for families here in Ontario by scrapping the cap-and-trade tax, lowering hydro bills and providing tax relief to parents, small businesses and the working poor;

- reducing the regulatory burden and making life easier for entrepreneurs, to ensure that the world knows Ontario is open for business;

- restoring accountability in our public institutions. I'm excited that the government has called for a commission of inquiry into the financial practices of government;

- building 15,000 more long-term-care beds over the next five years, and an historic \$3.8-billion investment in mental health;

- respecting the parents of children with autism by increasing supports;

- partnering with Toronto and other GTA municipalities to build a world-class transit system;

- forging a new relationship with our front-line health care providers in this province; and

- respecting our men and women in uniform, who put their lives on the line to ensure we live in a free and safe society.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau summed it up when he said, “As soon as public service ceases to be the chief business of the citizens and they would rather serve ... their money” than their peers, “the state is not far from its fall.”

I am proud to be part of a government, led by Premier Ford, that is for the people.

In closing, I would like to thank my fellow members of the assembly for their time, and the people of Oakville for the trust they have placed in me. I look forward to working with everybody in this assembly and getting to know each of you better in the months and years ahead.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now it's time for questions and comments.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I always enjoy being in the House with our new members who come in. It's so refreshing, hearing the stories and how you're going to be bringing some of the experience and some of the family relationships and the history that you have here to Queen's Park. It gives me an opportunity to get to know you and to connect with you guys.

To the member from Ottawa West–Nepean, in regard to the autism file: My friend, you have a friend. I do have some individuals in my riding, Dennis Lendrum and Jo Beyers, who would love to have a conversation with you in regard to Dennis dealing with his grandchild and Jo dealing with her son, who is much older, who is in the older spectrum, and finding out how we get the older autism individuals into the work field so that we can develop the programs in order to reintroduce them and take the stigma away from them.

To the member from Oakville: a class act, my friend, recognizing the one who was here who served behind

you. That's a class act. Use the example of the eagle and the owl. When you're talking to kids in your classrooms, it's a great connection when you're telling them our roles and responsibilities that are here.

You both talked on a few things that are really concerning for me. I know it's Conservative code language when we talk about “efficiencies” and “reducing regulatory burden.” To me that's code for job losses and service losses. I'm going to be working with you individuals as we move on to these issues and making sure that those decisions that you're going to be making, that are going to be hard, don't affect Ontarians in a negative way.

Earlier this afternoon—I do want to tell the member from Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte: 23 years, my friend? Congratulations on your anniversary. It's well-deserved. She's an angel. Keep her, and don't forget: Once this is all done, the thing that you're left with is your family. Don't forget your family.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from Ajax—

Mr. Lorne Coe: No, Whitby, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Oh, Whitby. Sorry, it's changing around every time.

Mr. Lorne Coe: The home of the late James Michael Flaherty.

To the members from Ottawa West–Nepean and Oakville: Thank you for your eloquence. Thank you for the humanity that you brought to the chamber today—we need those reminders from time to time about some of the motivations that bring us to this place—and for the points that you made and highlighted that are in the throne speech.

Speaker, change won't be easy. We outlined a number of initiatives in the throne speech. John F. Kennedy, the late American president, once said this: “Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future.” So we're getting to work quickly so that the people whom we have the privilege of serving, whether it be in Ottawa West–Nepean or Oakville, who gave us a clear mandate—and it was a clear mandate—can see real change and get the respect they deserve from their government, putting everyday workers and families first. They deserve no less. It will require unity of purpose, a clear vision and a lot of hard work, which is already under way and will continue to be demonstrated in the days and months ahead.

As we have other speakers whom we're going to be listening to, I would encourage all those present today to listen very carefully as we, together, move forward to make a substantive difference here in the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to congratulate the members who participated in this debate today from Ottawa West–Nepean and Oakville for their contributions to this debate.

Specifically, the member from Ottawa West–Nepean talked about his family situation and the trials and tribulations of having someone in their family who has special needs, who has autism. He was fortunate enough to have the tools and the opportunity and the wherewithal to deal with this situation. He talked about how he was the representative for his family's voice and he was successful. But I can tell you, Speaker, that there are a lot of people in Ontario and in my riding who don't have that advocacy in them. They need that advocacy in their government. They need to make sure that the government is doing the right thing by making sure that there is affordable supportive housing for people who have autism and that they can move on independently from their families.

We know that there are families with adult autistic children where the parents are aging. They're getting older. Therefore, we need to have the affordable supportive units for those individuals. I heard that many times over on the campaign trail, where parents needed respite care, where we needed full-time programs for adult children and children to access, so I am so glad that this member has brought that issue up, because it's ingrained in our ridings.

We need to make sure that we do better for families who have children and adult children with disabilities. How we can do better is to provide them with the resources that they need, and that does mean investing in those families and investing in Ontario. I hope that this government is going to step up and pay attention to that and actually make sure that those investments come out in real life changes for families who have children who need help.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: I would like to thank the member from Ottawa West–Nepean and the member from Oakville for their comments.

I think that, as a government for the people, we're going to see that the supports that we will be putting in place for those who are vulnerable, for those who have faced the challenges of family members with autism—we will be the government that does move forward, making life easier not just for those who are able-bodied but for all people in Ontario. In our throne speech, we saw that. That is what our mandate is going to be, moving forward.

It was great to hear my colleague from Oakville talking about his family and how much of a support they are to him. As we move forward, we're going to see that having that good family base, the people who are supporting us as members of provincial Parliament, having that grounded—letting us know that we need to be moving forward working for the people themselves, making life easier for them by reducing things like the cost of electricity.

It's paramount that people in Ontario have the opportunity to not only heat their home but pay for their food. We are going to see that this government, moving

forward, will do those things through the support of great members, such as the member from Oakville and the member from Ottawa West–Nepean.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to stand up and speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now back to the member from Ottawa West–Nepean for final comments.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I would like to begin by thanking the member from Algoma–Manitoulin for his very kind remarks. Absolutely, I would love to have the opportunity to talk with you about some of your constituents and get the chance to meet them. I was extremely privileged in my former career to serve as the special adviser on autism to the federal Minister of Health, and we travelled across the country hearing stories from west coast to east coast about families who have been going through these similar challenges. Every time I hear those stories, it makes me even more motivated to try and do something about this issue. I see a phenomenal opportunity as we begin this new government to actually make a substantial difference.

I would like to also acknowledge my colleague from Oakville for his wonderful speech. Again, as was mentioned earlier, it's wonderful to hear the personal motivations that drive each and every one of us to pursue public service, which I spoke about in my speech.

I mentioned the late Jim Flaherty several times in my speech and mentioned his challenge for folks to answer the call, and I believe that the member from Whitby is doing a phenomenal job at answering that call and serving the people of Whitby well. I have no doubt that Mr. Flaherty is up there, raising a pint of Guinness in your honour and happy to see you serving this chamber so well, along with, of course, the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

To the member from London–Fanshawe: I couldn't agree more. My family was fortunate that we were able to navigate the system and get the support that we needed for my brother, but there are far too many families that are still in those crisis situations. In Ottawa alone right now, the wait-list for individuals with autism who are seeking ABA treatment is at 2,000. So we have much work to do, and I'm excited about the opportunity ahead.

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

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I wanted to begin by saying thank you to the new Speaker and hope that he will accept my sincerest congratulations on his election. I know that everyone on this side of the House hopes that he will be fair and judicious in his rulings over the next four years.

It's a humbling privilege and truly an honour to rise and deliver my inaugural speech today. That's especially true as I look to my left and say hi to my mommy—that's Ossie Lindo—and to my sister Lisa, who is here from Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Can you tell us stories?

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: We've got some time.

And also, when I look in front of me, I see my very best friend who will come up again in this speech, Jessica Carter—hi, guys—and her daughter, Aina. You look beautiful.

Please allow me to begin by thanking, as well, Daiene Vernile, who worked diligently to represent the people of Kitchener Centre before me. She was dedicated to the constituents she served and noted, when we spoke after the election, that despite the demanding realities of this role there was something special that happened when we were able to get the job done for somebody who really needed it.

I would also like to thank the residents of Kitchener Centre who have entrusted me with their concerns and their vision for our community. I'm committed to earning their ongoing respect by doing what I once did on a smaller scale as the director of diversity and equity at Wilfrid Laurier University. Given the gravity of the challenges that we face not only in Kitchener but also across Ontario, they have asked me to use my voice, a voice that they trust will truthfully and earnestly speak out about the issues that impact us most.

As we have all heard through our orientation, we now form part of a small minority of people blessed with the honour to sit where so many have sat before, each person connected, despite their political affiliation, by a deep desire to create an Ontario that thrives well into the future.

Though humbled by this honour, I would also be remiss if I did not speak openly about the concerns that have already been raised in the short time that I've been elected into this important role. To ground this discussion, I need to begin by taking a moment to offer my own land acknowledgement, an acknowledgement that was sorely missed during the throne speech. I actually double-checked Ryerson's website and wanted to provide that as a starting point, since it is just up the street:

"Toronto is in the 'Dish With One Spoon Territory.' The Dish With One Spoon is a treaty between the Anishinaabe, Mississaugas and Haudenosaunee that bound them to share the territory and protect the land. Subsequent Indigenous nations and peoples, Europeans and all newcomers have been invited into this treaty in the spirit of peace, friendship and respect."

It is so important to recognize how this reality can and will shape the nature of our discussions as we move through the next four years together. As the Indigenous elders also explained—Ryerson, on their website, provided a little bit more info—"We all eat out of the dish, all of us that share this territory, with only one spoon. That means we have to share the responsibility of ensuring the dish is never empty, which includes taking care of the land and the creatures we share it with. Importantly, there are no knives at the table, representing that we must keep the peace."

My daughters have just arrived. It's like all of the things have come into one. I will come back to you, girls; I did not forget you.

It is out of respect for all the people who have worked diligently to protect the land and water that sustain us

that criticism about the lack of attention to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by the current government has arisen among my constituents in Kitchener Centre. While the throne speech began with a discussion of the need to work together regardless of our race, gender or creed, when actions to reconcile past conflicts and current social and political hardships are left unspoken, the same people who we claim to support and care for feel silenced and alone. The sudden cancellation of Indigenous curriculum writing workshops just days before the sessions were to occur, serve, whether intentionally or not, to breed the silencing while leaving elders, Indigenous curriculum specialists and other community members at a financial loss for contracts unfulfilled. As people grapple with this sudden shift of priorities within the Ministry of Education, at a time when we had committed to turning reconciliation into action, people start to feel an intense loneliness.

As a Black woman, I must admit that I feel alone in this House. Election day was bittersweet for me. While I celebrated a victory, Justice George Carter, the first Black Canadian-born judge, transitioned. He was and will always be my mentor and a large, important part of my family. His granddaughter is Jessica Carter, my best friend. Her mother, Linda Carter, hired me some years ago to develop a curriculum guide for high school students in all subjects that was based on a documentary that she had produced and directed about his life. This guide was to ensure that his legacy would live on in our schools long after he died. But when the throne speech was read aloud, I realized that his legacy would now have to be understood within a much more divisive context.

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Justice Carter's story is one of a man who was the only Black person in his class at Osgoode. Much of his career was spent working with young Black men and women who, forced to navigate the throes of a disjointed criminal justice system, had to develop strategies to address the realities of anti-Black racism right here in Ontario.

Sadly, the throne speech hinted at a commitment from the current government to reopen the pathway to carding, or what some call "police checks," by police across Ontario. This seemingly neutral practice is one whose impact has been all but neutral. In Waterloo region, for example, the Waterloo Record had a headline on March 25th, 2016, that read, "Waterloo Regional Police Four Times More Likely to Stop You if You Are Black." The article explained that although Black people made up only 2% of the local population, they were 8% of all individuals carded. When the numbers were looked at even more closely, it was also found that Black people were the only visibility minority to be stopped far more often. In this case, it was four times more often than its share of the population.

So while I sat in the House listening to the throne speech, I worried. I worried about Justice Carter's legacy. Was his fight for racial justice in vain? Would we have to now teach his work as an exception to a racially flawed

rule that would continue to keep Black people overrepresented in the criminal justice system and underrepresented in spaces like this?

I also remembered that the very last consultation conducted by Justice Tulloch was in my riding, in Kitchener Centre, so I was part of the people who were there to voice our concerns about what was happening with carding: the long-term impact, the mental health impact, the overrepresentation in the criminal justice system. Now, today, I'm learning that that didn't matter. So I do ask the current government, why doesn't my voice matter? When we decide that we're going to roll back the time and do more consultations, do I have to now find more time to repeat my story over and over and over again? Or will we just go to our library, which is full of reports that talk about this impact and have talked about this impact and have been left on shelves? I'm just wondering, why doesn't my voice matter?

It's very difficult not to feel alone when asked to reflect on becoming part of yet another exclusive club, the club of firsts. Justice Carter was the first Black Canadian-born judge in Canada. In 2003, my uncle Dr. Alvin Curling was elected the first Black Speaker of the House in Ontario.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Your uncle? I didn't know that.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I know. Things just keep getting more and more real, people.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What a complicated web.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: It is complicated.

While I'm proud of being the first Black woman to be elected to provincial Parliament in Waterloo region, it's difficult not to be reminded that it's 2018. Should Black communities in Waterloo region be content with my first? And what does this first really mean if communities of people who look like me will likely be facing an onslaught of increased surveillance, mistrust and disrespect because the government is unwilling to reflect on how seemingly neutral processes and practices impact Black and Indigenous communities far more than their white counterparts? I cannot help but feel alone in this House.

As an educated woman elected to the role of MPP, I have also taken some time to reflect on the most recent decision to replace the 2015 sex ed curriculum with an outdated health curriculum from 1998. My doctoral work was earned in education, and I've spent over a decade working with educators to tackle difficult material like racism, accessibility, gender equity and classism, and to challenge homophobia in the classroom. I've fought for institutional recognition of gender-based violence and sexual assaults, and I've pushed institutions to address gaps in their systems that keep the most vulnerable in harm's way.

Since the decision to revert to the 1998 curriculum was released to the press, I have been bombarded with letters, tweets, Facebook messages and emails from Kitchener Centre residents who are enraged by this decision. They have written to me and they have told me their stories of having to endure years of sexual abuse as

children because they did not know that what was happening to them was wrong. They explained to me that they had no words—literally no language was taught to them, whether it was at home or at school—to explain that the violence that they were experiencing was real.

A young woman from Kitchener—we're going to call her Jenny—shared with me her experience of being abused at the age of six and not knowing how to tell her family about her experience. Another young girl from Kitchener described laughing at the words that she used to describe her own abuse at the hands of her stepfather because she had not yet learned the real names for the male genitalia at the time that she disclosed her abuse to the police—and this was just last year. Neither of these young women had gone through the new health curriculum. Both of these stories and the dozens of others that I have been privy to from my constituents serve as a clear reminder of the impact that teaching the 1998 curriculum will have on an entire generation of students that are educated in Ontario.

From many of the people who have reached out to me, it is clear from their experience that they, too, feel lonely. But—breathe—I am an eternal optimist. I still carry some hope. Just this weekend, I was invited to a film screening at the Kitchener Public Library. The Uprooted collective had invited kids who identified as queer or trans to join them for a week-long filmmaking session. In five days, these young people had created LGBTQ-positive short films, some carrying the weight of their burdens as they navigated the experiences of living on the margins.

During my conversations with these aspiring filmmakers, they confirmed to me that they were all aware of the decision to revert to an outdated curriculum. They didn't have to say much to me before I realized that they were scared. They felt alone. They were worried that their lives would be questioned, that their experiences would be devalued, that what they needed would be ignored and that their voices would be silenced. But I made them a commitment. I promised them that I would work with their organizers to build a year-long supplementary program to help them feel seen and heard no matter what choices the government makes.

As I watched educators across the Waterloo region and beyond began to organize, strategize and solidify their commitment to put the needs of their students first, I realized that I wasn't as alone as I may have thought. I started to list the organizations from my riding and from the broader Waterloo region, just to remind myself of the number of people who will stand up alongside, behind and right there in front of us to ensure that we hold the government to account—organizations like the SHORE Centre of Waterloo region, with their efforts to supplement teaching materials and come into schools to present healthy lifestyle conversations with students of all ages; people like the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario—they have spoken up and they have spoken out about the need to protect our children from sexual assault by teaching them the language of consent and the names of the parts of our body in age-appropriate ways. I just want to note that these age-appropriate ways are the ways

that the experts who were consulted in the 2015 sex ed curriculum have said we need and didn't have in the 1998 curriculum—which brings me right back to where I started, with regard to the past consultations.

I have a sincere question, as part of the opposition, to the government: What happens to the thousands of people who were already consulted? What happens to their voice? When we do a consultation again, is that added to the consultations that were already done? And if I'm asking you this question today, what do you think the people who are outside of this privileged space are asking themselves? Why don't we just tell people what we're doing? We need the transparency. There is no way that we can work together without it.

I have been thinking so much about a group of courageous survivors of sexual assault and those who are their supports who are part of a group called the Advocates for a Student Culture of Consent. They have not stopped developing social media strategies to make it known that without a culture of consent, young women and men are at greater risk of sexual assault and rape. I thought about the work of sexual assault support centres all across Ontario that have for far too long argued for the need to create a consent-based culture in order to curb the number of sexual assaults that arise in our communities, and all of a sudden, something clicked.

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I may feel alone in this House—there will be times, I guarantee, where I will feel alone in this House—but I don't feel alone in Kitchener Centre. In Kitchener Centre, I'm surrounded by the strength of community advocates, concerned citizens, brilliant parents and courageous young people who put their trust in me to hold the government to account as a member of the most diverse official opposition this House has likely ever seen.

So I want to say, again, thank you to Kitchener Centre for allowing me to represent you in this exclusive club. I want to thank all of the ancestors upon whose shoulders we are now standing. And I want to thank Andrea Horwath, in particular, and the esteemed colleagues that form part of the official opposition, for showing with actions what true commitment to equity, inclusion and social justice really is. I think that piece has to be reiterated.

One of the things—hi, Sofia; hi, Danica. Those are my daughters. One of the things I often tell them is—they are 13 and 10—that it's one thing for you to tell your kids to say sorry, and it's another thing for them to show with their actions that they're sorry. I don't care about the word, to be perfectly honest; I want to see the action. So I just want to reiterate that last little bit, that what I am so proud of is the privilege of standing alongside the official opposition who are showing with their actions what true commitment to equity, inclusion and social justice really and truly is.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jane McKenna: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate MPP Nicholls from Chatham-Kent-Leamington for his new position as Deputy Speaker. I am

also very proud to congratulate MPP Arnott, Wellington-Halton Hills, for his position as Speaker.

This throne speech lays out the agenda for our Progressive Conservative government moving forward for the people of Ontario and reiterates our focus on putting more money in the pockets of Ontario citizens. It won't be an easy task, but it is realistic and achievable and, most importantly, absolutely necessary for us to rein in government expenditures and restore accountability and trust in Ontarians.

Public finances: To the people of Burlington and all of Ontario, relief is on the way, with 15,000 long-term-care beds, a reduction in hydro rates, much-needed expenditures in mental health and addictions, as well as supportive housing. We will be focusing on creating and restoring Ontario's position as the economic engine of our nation.

I have heard repeatedly from my constituents in Burlington that they support the hiring of an independent auditor to go through government expenditures line by line in order to identify and eliminate duplication and waste. I am thrilled to be part of a government that is for the people, and honoured to listen to our Premier today in question period about honouring his commitments in his campaign for the people of Ontario.

Business owners in Burlington are delighted with the promise to reduce the tax burden, as well as anticipating reductions of onerous regulations that cost them time and money. I echo Premier Ford's message: "Ontario, we're open for business."

What an exciting time. You can feel the energy and passion.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: For the member from Kitchener Centre—my God. It goes to show you are never too old to learn. I've been here 28 years and, I've got to say, I was attentive to her speech because it wasn't just a question of passion and knowledge but of sharing information a lot of us may not have thought of, from a perspective that I may not be coming from. I think that's what this place is all about. What this Legislature is all about, in my view—one of the things that's important is that we share our experiences in a way that we all can learn and, hopefully from that, learn how to do better legislation and make better decisions. I've just got to say, in my 28 years here—as a maiden speech, that has to be one of the best, to be quite honest. I know my other colleagues may get mad at me for saying that, because I know John Vanthof gave a good speech once—

Mr. John Vanthof: Once.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Once—and I think I did about half the time. But I've got to say: Very well done.

The other thing, and you touched on this, is family and friends. I think my good friend the member from Algoma-Manitoulin mentioned it earlier, and I just want to repeat what he said, because you were saying essentially the same thing, and that is, we always have to be grounded in our family, our communities and our

friends. In the end, you're here for whatever amount of time you are. Some of us who are lucky will be here longer; some of us won't be as lucky. But the only thing you walk in here with is your family, your friends and your self-respect. To be able to hold onto all of those things, be true to your values, be true to your family and be true to your friends is something that I think, along the way, some of us forget at times. I think reminding us of that is quite helpful.

Again, I just want to congratulate you for what I thought was a very thoughtful speech, and to do that on a maiden speech and to hit some of the issues that you talked about is quite remarkable.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from Sarnia-Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: You were looking over there; you fooled me. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and it's good to see you in the chair.

Congratulations to the member from Kitchener Centre on her introductory speech—I guess we're not supposed to say "maiden speech" anymore; anyway, that's another issue. We'll talk about that another day.

I did want to reply to the throne speech; that's what we're here to debate. I had some thoughts on that, about the returning accountability and responsibility, the ending of hallway health care and creating good jobs. There are a number of legislative priorities that the government is already bringing in—one to end the strike at York University, which I can't believe is still going on. It was going on before we left here and went into the election. I thought, any day, it's going to settle. It's still not settled. We've got a new government. I think we should have acted long before now, but that's another story. We'll talk about that another day, and also the hydro changes that we're going to make to reduce hydro bills by a minimum of 12% and save families at least \$170 on their bills.

One thing I did want to touch on—I don't think I've got time in this 30-second hit. I will try to do it again later.

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Can I get another two minutes? No.

I do want to congratulate the member from Kitchener Centre. I know what it's like to get up and do your first speech in the House. It's a proud moment, and I see you have family here. That's good. I know you'll remember this day for a long time to come.

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

Mr. Ian Arthur: I would also like to extend congratulations to the member from Kitchener Centre. That was incredibly moving. Your words are truly felt.

Earlier, when the member from Whitby stood up and spoke about not being able to look to the past because we're going to miss the future, well, 1998 is a long way in the past. If we are looking to 1998, we are going to miss the future, and we are going to have more stories

like what we just heard here. I think that is such an incredible shame—a shame on this House to go backwards in time when we need to be looking to the future. Thank you.

Interjection.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Oh, I've got two minutes; I can keep going.

I am so proud to be part of this caucus. As you've said, the diversity of the backgrounds and the experiences that were brought here are so important, and listening to those and hearing those stories from both sides of the floor. I look forward to hearing the stories from across the floor as well, because those are what move people and those are what are so important as we write legislation or vote on legislation—understanding the real effects that it has on individuals and their families and brothers and daughters and mothers. That is what is so important, and that must be what we keep in mind as we vote on all these issues that we are looking forward to.

I would just say—30 seconds left.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We're testing you.

Mr. Ian Arthur: You're testing me, yes.

Again, I am so thankful to be here and to those who elected me, and truly, what a speech to try now to live up to when I have to give mine.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): We return to the member from Kitchener Centre for final comments.

1650

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: As I sit back and I start to listen to what all of the other members have said before—I think I wrote down everybody's places correctly, so I'm just going to say them and then you're just going to smile, okay? The members from Burlington, Timmins, Sarnia and Kingston and the Islands—I think I got everybody, so thank you all.

I think that the piece that is most important to me is that we're part of this club together, and it's people in power who have to go to the table. Part of what you learn when you do the kind of work that I've done or you have the lived experiences that I have is that so much doesn't get done because everybody is waiting for somebody who doesn't have the power to get to the table or get through the door or have the conversation that we're having right now. You're waiting for us to make the first move. Part of why York University is still on strike is because those in power are not going authentically to the table. I think if we all decided to go authentically to the table, we would have a very different kind of Ontario.

That's part of why people are asking the government to be transparent. We can sit and argue back and forth about that point, but one of the things that I've learned is that if somebody I am speaking to keeps telling me the same criticism, the only person that has the power to make the difference at that point is me, because I'm the one in power. That's how I've had to work with students. That's how I've had to approach equity work. That's how I've made change in the university system. By recognizing our power and our privilege, we can do things

differently. That's pretty much what everybody is asking of the government. As opposed to making choices that you are very secure on, that you're sure is the right way to move Ontario, but not telling us why, trust us. Trust that when you talk to us and you tell us why you're doing it that we would all be on the same page. If we're not, be open to hearing why. I think that that's really the heart of what it was that I was trying to get across and the heart of the criticism that I am hearing throughout today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'm about to ask for further debate, but before I do that, because it's perhaps unprecedented in our Legislature, further debate will be asked of the member from Guelph, the independent. Now, having said that, so that we're all clear, unfortunately our member from Guelph will only have seven and a half minutes, which he's fully aware of, but I wanted to make everyone else aware in the Legislature as well.

Having said that: Further debate? I recognize the member from Guelph.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise for the first time in this chamber to debate the speech from the throne. I want to take a moment to congratulate all members on their re-election or election, who are newbies like myself getting their feet wet. I also want to take a moment to express my sincere thanks to the people of Guelph for trusting me to represent our community at Queen's Park. I want to offer my heartfelt thanks to my wife, Sandy, and my daughters, Isabelle and Beata, for their love and support. Finally, I want to thank Green Party supporters from across the province for your passion and commitment in helping us make history. I will work hard to be a strong champion for Guelph and a strong voice for doing politics differently at Queen's Park.

I want to acknowledge that Queen's Park is located on the traditional lands of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca and most recently the Mississaugas of the Credit River. Today, Toronto is home to many Indigenous peoples from across Turtle Island, and I want to acknowledge my role as a steward of this land in the sacred duty we have to make decisions in this chamber that benefit the next seven generations.

Mr. Speaker, it is for this reason that I am deeply troubled by the lack of acknowledgement or mention of Indigenous people or issues in the speech from the throne. I believe Ontario has a responsibility to play an active role in achieving reconciliation, and I strongly encourage the government to not take Ontario backwards on the important journey towards reconciliation.

If we are to make decisions today that benefit our children, grandchildren and the next seven generations, then it's essential for Ontario to have a bold plan to address the climate crisis. We have a responsibility to deliver a climate plan that leaves them a livable planet, vibrant communities and a prosperous economy. Instead, the throne speech essentially outlines a dismantling of Ontario's limited climate plans without offering any alternative.

Combined with the cancellation of renewable energy contracts, this sends a clear message to businesses in Ontario and around the world that the new government is thumbing its nose at the \$7-trillion clean economy. It's like putting a big sign by the border that says Ontario is closed for business. We simply cannot afford to rip up contracts and thumb our noses at the fast-growing clean economy.

Ontario needs to skate to where the puck is going, not where it has been. We need to open Ontario for business in the \$7-trillion clean economy so that we can create good-paying jobs and generate prosperity to fund the public services that the people of Ontario expect—services such as health care, education, transit, affordable housing and social services.

Mr. Speaker, I want to work across party lines to deliver a climate plan that benefits our economy and leaves a livable future for our children, grandchildren and the next seven generations. We can do this and put money in people's pockets. Our plan for a carbon fee and dividend puts a price on pollution and delivers the money directly to people's pockets. It can be the foundation for a climate plan that tells homegrown businesses and clean-tech companies that Ontario is indeed open for business.

In the same way that Ontario cannot turn its back on growth in the clean economy and climate action, we cannot turn back the clock on giving our children the tools and information they need to be safe in today's world.

Mr. Speaker, in 1998, there were no smartphones, text messages, social media, Google searches and cyber-bullying. Same-sex marriage was not even legal yet. Neither one of my teenage daughters was born.

Many parents, students, teachers, educators and education experts tell me they fear that our children's safety will be at risk if we don't provide our kids with the tools and information they need in today's world. We must help our kids to navigate the complicated cyber world in which we live.

So I ask this government to put our children's safety first. I ask the government not to take away the choice of parents and students to learn a modern sex-ed curriculum.

Finally, I was elected on a promise to do politics differently, to reach across party lines to put people first. So I want to say to the new government that it is especially important for Ontario to invest in mental health and addiction programs, long-term-care beds for seniors, autism services and better public transit in communities across Ontario. While the government may not move as fast on these as I would like in making these investments, I will work with this government to improve these services for the benefit of my constituents in Guelph and for people across Ontario.

I want to conclude by encouraging the government to reconsider those parts of the throne speech that will take Ontario backwards, and, instead, build a bridge to the future that we can walk across confidently, with compassion for all Ontarians.

Thank you for the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments? The newly appointed Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the member from Guelph and welcome him to the Legislature. Thank you for bringing a fresh, new face and outlook to this Legislature; it's much needed.

On our side of the House, we definitely look forward to working with you as we're going forward. We're not always going to agree; however, speaking about the issues ongoing makes a better debate in the House and makes a better Ontario. So thank you.

I also want to take the opportunity to congratulate one of the Green Party members who ran against me in Elgin–Middlesex–London, Bronagh Morgan. She is quite the person. She is a lawyer. The personality that she brought to the table and the knowledge to the debates were truly outstanding, and I appreciated running against her. I'm thankful she didn't win, but I appreciated running against her.

1700

As we're talking about the green energy contracts, my riding has Dutton Dunwich. I've been working with the people of the riding for the last five years to stop that project from ever starting, because 84% of the residents in Dutton Dunwich voted against having these turbines come to the riding. It tore the community apart. There's a lot of healing that now must go on because a happy community that got along quite well soon divided into two different camps. Unfortunately, that's not what I believe the purpose of green energy is for this province—to tear apart communities. It's to work with communities, and this community said no.

I am fully supportive of ending this contract before the construction begins. I will continue to have the support of the people of Dutton Dunwich to ensure that it never does occur in that part of province. It's not welcome—let alone that we can't afford the energy, nor do we need the energy at this time.

I look forward to working with the member from Guelph going forward. I think we can accomplish a lot, working together on issues to help Ontarians. Welcome again to the Legislature. I look forward to meeting with you.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To the member from Guelph, as always, congratulations on your maiden speech.

I want to pick up on a couple of things that were just said, and that was the whole issue of the cancellation of this wind farm. It's called the White Pines Wind Project Termination Act, 2018. First of all, I agree that there are a lot of these projects that, if we were going to build them, should first of all have never been built by the private sector. They should have been built by OPG; it would have been a lot cheaper in the long run. But also, it used to be that when the system used to be public, we would look at what the energy needs of this province

were and we would build according to the need. The problem with what the Conservatives started under Harris and Eves, and then the Liberals accelerated, was that we started building projects that we didn't even need. So we have a surplus of power where we're paying two to three times the price that it costs OPG to generate their own power.

It never made any sense from our perspective as New Democrats. Yes, you need to build green power, absolutely; we need to go in that direction and we need to go fairly hard. But you need to build according to need, and if the strategy over the longer run is to replace some of the fossil fuels with green, that's fine, but let's do it within the public context.

The other thing is, though, that I just want to say that the government is really setting up a weird situation here. A Conservative government is telling the business community in Ontario and outside of this province that we are no longer a stable jurisdiction to do business in. That's what this is all about. This legislation, the way that it's written, says, "If you come to Ontario and you want to establish business here, a government is prepared to use its fiat in order to block your rights in the courts in order to enforce whatever contract you may have signed with the government or a government agency." That is a very, very tough situation to set up, and I think it's a precedent that is not going to bode well for Ontario investment. The fact that it's a Conservative government doing this is even stranger.

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

Hon. Steve Clark: First of all, Speaker, I want to take the opportunity to congratulate you not just on being re-elected for the people of Chatham-Kent–Leamington, but also on seeing you back in the chair. It's great to see you there, and I look forward to you dealing with some of the antics that take place in the House.

I also want to take this opportunity, Speaker, to say through you to the member for Guelph, my congratulations to you as well on your election. There were many, many times in this House that I would see you sitting up in the public gallery. I knew that someday, with your tenacity and your hard work, you would be sitting here. I want to thank you for all the work that you've done. You've spent a lot of time travelling across the province, talking about your party and what your party stands for. Congratulations to you, and I look forward to working with you.

I'm glad you did mention the opportunity to work across party lines. I think there is a lot of opportunity even for independent members, or those classified as independent members, to have their voices heard in the Legislature, like you did today, to have their voices heard at committees and also to take the opportunity to put forward the issues that are important to people in their communities.

In saying that, I do want to clarify some of your comments. I think our party was crystal clear during the election of what we would be doing with the cap-and-

trade slush fund, and the fact that we wanted to make sure that people who had that money collected from them got that money put back into their pockets. I don't think it would come as a surprise, Speaker, through you to the members, that after our election we would put that plan into place, but it's very important.

I live in a border community. My riding has two international bridges to the United States. Make no mistake, to the member opposite: Our province is going to be open for business under Premier Ford, and we're going to get a lot of things done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from Timiskaming-Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. I'd also like to congratulate you on your re-election and your re-appointment as Speaker.

I'd like to congratulate the member from Guelph. I have spoken to him many times on the hustings. He, like me, comes from a farm. I think he's partial to John Deeres; I won't hold that against him.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, no, no.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's green. That's probably where he got the connection.

But one thing he brought up and that was referred to by the last speaker regarding cap-and-trade: A lot of the people who called me who were planning on actually using those funds to put in insulation and windows felt that it was a huge step backwards, because where we live—this is a big, diverse province—right now it's pretty hot and dry and fiery, but in the wintertime, it's very cold. People saw that program come out, and people were excited about that program.

What was funny is that some of the same people, who had never really thought it through, were excited about cap-and-trade being cancelled, but on the flipside, never thought about how the green energy programs for windows and insulation would also be cancelled, because nobody told them that. That's one of the things that I think we're going to find over and over, and we could probably work together with the member from Guelph on this, to actually make the government tell the whole story. I remember when they were on the same side as us and we fought the Liberals to tell the whole story. It doesn't take long; it just takes a walk across the aisle, and all of a sudden things are exactly the same. The wind farm cancellations, the ones that are built, are going to be the gas plants scandal Ford-style.

Hon. Todd Smith: No, no.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's what they're going to be, and that's what the Liberals said, as well: "Oh, no, no." It's going to be exactly the same—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. I now return to the member from Guelph for final comments.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: First of all, I just want to say a deep thanks for the kind words and congratulations from the minister and member from Elgin-Middlesex-London, the member and opposition House leader from

Timmins, the member and minister from Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes—your riding name is getting longer, I see—and also the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane. I will have to say that I did learn to operate a tractor. It was a 4010 John Deere, which probably dates me, but it still is one of my favourite tractors.

I just wanted to respond to some of the comments regarding the cancellation of renewable energy contracts, because I think that one of the challenges that we face is the mistakes that the previous government made in putting corporate interests ahead of community interests in rolling out renewable energy contracts. And so I would ask the new government to take into consideration that it's not the technology, so to speak; it's the way in which the technology was implemented. If you look at the dramatically declining prices and costs of renewable energy, moving forward, we can implement renewable energy contracts in a way that benefits the people of Ontario, so I would ask for your consideration in that regard as we move forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the chief government whip, the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to start off by thanking my family, my friends, supporters, volunteers, donors and everyone involved in my campaign. I'd like to congratulate the Speaker, Mr. Arnott, the member from Wellington-Halton Hills, and of course, you, the member from Chatham-Kent-Wellington, for the deputy Speaker role.

Interjection: Leamington.

Mr. Bill Walker: Leamington, sorry—and all the new members and returning members, as well. It truly is a distinct honour to be standing in this House once again, representing all of the folks who chose and sent us here.

1710

Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to wade into the throne speech outline for the plan for the people. I plan to share a little bit of the thought process today. But just before I start: Mr. Vanthof, the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane, I believe, was talking about green energy. I just want to make sure that people at home are reminded again that that program was three times over budget with the Liberals, so we had to, at some point, bring in the reins. If they had put limits on it beforehand, we wouldn't have had to do exactly what we did as quickly as we did, because we would have known that it was on budget, on time. It's not, so we have to make sure that we rein that in. You're one of the people who stood alongside us in this House complaining about the debt and the deficit that they were running with their poor management. We're trying to correct that. As soon as we got into office, we tried to take measures to try to bring our great province back.

We campaigned saying, and in the throne speech our Premier Doug Ford said, that we would lower electricity bills, that we would cancel unnecessary renewable energy projects to help lower those bills, and we have

done that. We'll cut business and personal taxes. We'll reduce gas prices. We'll ensure long-term, stable funding for the health care system by adding 15,000 new long-term-care beds and putting a \$1.9-billion investment in mental health, addictions and supportive housing. We'll launch an inquiry and a commission of inquiry into government finances. Again, certainly the people in my riding and across the province were asking us to do those things, Mr. Speaker, and we will deliver on those.

As promised, we are cleaning up that hydro mess. For the six and a half years that I've stood in this House, that was the biggest issue that I've dealt with. We'll restore accountability and trust: no cooking the books to make the numbers look good. We'll end hallway health care, we'll create good jobs, and we'll put more money in Ontarians' pockets.

Mr. Speaker, Premier Ford made a promise and said the CEO of Hydro One would be gone. Promise made, promise kept. The Premier said the board of Hydro One would be gone. Promise made, promise kept. I have to actually acknowledge that they came to the table and that will be without cost to the province of Ontario.

Many members of the other opposition parties are trying to spin that it's going to be huge amounts of money. At the end of the day, all of those things—to the people at home listening and watching—were already in the negotiated compensation package for the CEO. Those are not things that are going to cost any more than they already would have. Frankly, had he stayed in position, he would have gained more stock options, which would have cost Ontarians even more money. I give credit to the minister and the people behind the scenes who negotiated that. I do give credit to those board members and the CEO for taking that path that they did, which will not end up costing Ontarians as much as it could have.

Those 15,000 long-term-care beds: I was the critic for two and a half years. I travelled the province. In every single area of the province, we heard people talking about the need to have more beds out there, to get people out of hospital who were actually in a bed that they didn't need to be in; they couldn't get their loved ones into a long-term-care facility. This is significant twofold. It's going to help the person, which is the most important. We should always be thinking about the person and the front-line care. It's going to help those people in those facilities who are providing care, and it's going to take people out of hospital, the most costly form of health care we have in our province, and move those people out of beds there into a proper facility that's designed for their long-term-care needs. That will help them and their caregivers.

We're going to create good jobs, as I said earlier. We're going to be open for business. The Premier, in his very first couple of questions this morning, said he is opening up the doors of Ontario for business. Ontario is welcoming business, and that's something we haven't heard for 15 years in Ontario. We've had businesses saying to us, "We want to stay here, we want to expand here, but the Liberal government made it almost impos-

sible to do that." So I am proud today to say that we're starting down that road to opening up the doors for Ontario, keeping business and bringing more business back here, and putting more money into Ontarians' pockets.

We are also bringing an end to the York University strike. We're repealing the cap-and-trade carbon tax from the books and cancelling wind and solar projects that have cost \$37 billion more than the market price, and actually will be overpaid by the end of 2032 by \$133 billion. Think of the money we could have put into health care, long-term care, mental health, the less fortunate and education with the \$133 billion that the Liberal government actually prepared to overpay in that green energy contract. It's one of the biggest things I've heard.

My colleague from Elgin–Middlesex: I'm proud to see he was made Minister of Natural Resources. The folks of Dutton Dunwich, 85% of those people, said they were an unwilling host: "Do not put them here." That government railroaded and put the wind turbines there, and next door, where they actually had a willing community, put none in there. We've certainly had the same situation in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. The people there have been unequivocal in saying, "We do not want wind turbines in our municipalities." I'm glad to say that we've campaigned on that and we've stood up again. Promise made: We will get rid of the Green Energy Act. Promise kept: The Green Energy Act is gone.

For the first time in a very long time, the government's priorities are aligned with my constituents' in the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. As I mentioned, the Green Energy Act: Just a few years ago, I stood in this House to present petitions against further wind turbine development in my riding. These petitions were signed by more than 5,300 people from around Grey–Bruce and they supported our plan to cancel these projects.

On lowering gas prices: For years, the previous administration introduced higher taxes. They were collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 10 years ago, and yet they still ran deficits, driving up the cost of everything from gasoline to everyday goods. My constituents in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound want and need this relief, and they support our plan to lower gas prices.

We are cancelling the unnecessary, unaffordable and ineffective cap-and-trade carbon tax on Ontario families and businesses. We are doing this because there is no evidence anywhere that cap-and-trade actually does work to significantly reduce carbon emissions. My constituents support this.

I want to add one more relevant point, Mr. Speaker. I remember, on that side of the House, challenging amendments in committee, saying we want to see where it's going to be accountable—when they were trying to collect that tax, that it was actually going to impact carbon emissions. It wasn't. They were going to put it into a slush fund. They would have no accountability to say, "We're actually going to reduce that." What they were doing was allowing big emitters to continue to do that, but pay for it. That is not doing anything for the

environment, so we are glad to get rid of that. We were going to send billions of dollars to California to help their economy, to help their country, not Ontario. So the people in my riding were quite pleased to see that we were getting rid of that. We want to keep that money, that investment and those dollars in Ontario, helping people in Ontario.

As I've said earlier, long-term care and improving access to health care—they welcome our plan to add 15,000 beds. This government had 15 years and never added any new long-term-care beds, and yet we know the baby boom demographic has been moving forward to us. We knew that we had to have more beds, and they kept playing games with redeveloping, and even that number they never, ever accomplished; about 30%, if I'm kind. But at the end of the day, we all know that the baby boom demographic is moving and those beds are needed across our great province to not only allow people to be in them but, again, to sustain those communities where people have lived, were born, so our seniors who built our great country and our great province can stay in the communities where they actually made the difference, rather than trying to ship them off to all the urban areas, which is again where the Liberals were taking their plan, which was to move everything to the urban areas, which would have decimated rural and northern Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, we know that we have 32,000 people on a provincial wait-list that is projected to grow to 50,000 by 2021. My constituents in the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound solidly support our plan to add this capacity—15,000 beds—and end hallway medicine.

People appreciate that we're actually stepping up. We're actually accepting responsibility and accountability. We're saying we will do this and we are delivering, as I have already said, on a number of things. Promise made, promise kept. They're happy to have a government that is saying to them, "This is what we're going to do." It's challenging. We've accepted the biggest debt that this province has ever had. We're inherited that, and it's going to take us time and energy and strategic thinking to start to turn our province around. But I'm pleased to say our Premier and our great cabinet and caucus colleagues are prepared to step up. We're prepared to be responsible, to be honest with people and say, "Here's what we are going to do to make our province better."

Most recently, they witnessed our government rein in, as I said in my earlier remarks, the exorbitant executive compensation at Hydro One. Promise made, promise kept. The people wanted to hear that. They wanted to see that when someone says they're going to it, they actually did it. They can't fathom that the Liberals would legitimize paying the CEO of a corporation 10 times more than what the equivalent CEOs in either Quebec or BC were being paid. So the people have applauded and said, "It's about time someone paid attention to our money," and ensured they were spending their money frugally, wisely and with an investment mindset. Every dollar we collect is from the backs of the hard-working Ontarians that we are given the privilege to represent,

and we want to make sure that we're spending that money wisely.

Let's be clear: This government, our government, our PC government with Premier Ford, is ready and able to make Ontario an attractive place to invest in and open for business.

With that, I'm going to turn it over to my colleague from Sarnia–Lambton who is going to carry this debate home. I just want to share with any of the new members in here, if you ever want to talk to someone about a PMB, he's had five PMBs passed in this House. He is the king of the PMB. Talk to Bob Bailey, my friend from Sarnia–Lambton.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Before he speaks, I have to recognize him.

I recognize the member from Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you to our whip, the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, for those kind comments. I think he tended to gild the lily a bit.

Anyway, it was a pleasure working on those private members' bills with colleagues from the NDP and the Liberals at the time. I look forward to it with the independent members as well. If there are opportunities where I can work with them and we can put something forward that's very good, I look forward to that.

1720

I'm going to kind of finish off where the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound left off. I won't be able to articulate it quite as fast as he did. What I did want to speak about was the ending of the wind turbine contracts and that green energy program as it existed. It affected ridings all across Ontario, mine included. We were fortunate in Sarnia–Lambton that we only had a footprint in the northern part of my riding, Plympton–Wyoming. We were able to hold them off. I kept saying, "No more leases. Don't sign any leases, property owners. That will prevent the wind turbine firms from being able to get a foothold." There were always some people who signed, whether it was greed or need. They were some people who did sign and didn't think about the impact on their neighbours, I don't think, very often.

In the south part of my riding, in St. Clair township, it was going to be dramatically affected by the Otter Creek wind turbine project that was cancelled as recently as Friday. In that case it was going to be built in Kent county, in the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex's and the member from Chatham–Kent–Leamington's ridings, between the two of them. It was going to be built in the next-door riding, but the people there were concerned—and the member from Guelph will certainly appreciate that—that the aquifer in the south part of my riding in St. Clair township was going to be affected by these wind turbines built in a riding altogether different. They were concerned. Experts had said it could migrate through the aquifer. There were issues in Kent county already with a number of water wells. I know they spoke here. Different members from the NDP, especially, and our party—the two members I mentioned already, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and Chatham–Kent–

Leamington—spoke about it many times here in the House, and I presented petitions as well.

So there were concerns about that if the Otter Creek wind turbine project had gone ahead. Those people are breathing a sigh of relief today, both in the Otter Creek community and also in the south part of my riding. I know the mayor and the councillors and the people of St. Clair township are breathing a sigh of relief today.

As far as other wind turbine projects—the solar projects were one thing, but the wind turbines were such an imposition on the landscape and on the neighbours. I know families down home in both my riding and Lambton–Kent–Middlesex where people in the same family no longer speak. One parent I know said that at Thanksgiving and Christmas, the last thing you talk about is energy, because some of the family signed up for wind turbine leases and the others didn't and didn't know about it. Maybe in some cases the father signed a lease and you've got children on both sides of the issue. It has split churches and communities.

I'm glad that this wind energy/green energy project is done, finished. It should have never started in the first place, in my opinion. It should never have been subsidized by the average ratepayer. I mean, if somebody wants to build a wind turbine, if you can get it through the planning process and build it without any subsidies, maybe we can take a look at it, and the same with the solar projects. But to subsidize these behemoths—it made such an intrusion on the landscape, and, like I said, it split communities and split families. I'm glad they're done, and I think most people in Ontario are. We campaigned on that, and it should be no surprise to anyone that, with the swearing in of the Ford government, they came to an end.

Also, with the executives, everybody is feeling sorry for this executive and the board. I mean, I think they voted themselves a \$60,000 raise, the board of directors. I think they were just asking for trouble, personally. I saw some missive today in one of the journals, one of the press. I'm not sure which editorial it was, but they were, "Woe is me. Who are they going to get to run this giant corporation now that this Conservative government has thrown the people out?" I'm sure there will be lots of men and women, qualified men and women, who are going to step up who will want to help run this organization for a lot less money than the former board were being paid. I'm sure that those people will come forward because I think there are people in Ontario who want to see proper decisions made at Hydro One because they're taxpayers too. They've got children who live here and family, and they're going to want to see that organization run properly going forward.

One other thing I want to touch on—I will go back to the other thing a little later—is something that I've never had a chance to comment on in my two-minute hits. I had occasion the other day to speak to a gentleman in one of the hallways over here. He was with me and the Minister of Education. We were coming down the hall, and he was congratulating her and myself as well on re-election. He

said, "I had an interesting conversation with my daughter and my granddaughter the other day." He said, "My daughter is out working. She's got a pretty good job"—I don't know exactly what it is; university-educated, of course. "She was starting to tell me, 'Dad, I know that there is all this big kerfuffle over the sex ed. But I don't really think it's so bad.'"

He said, "Before I could say anything, my granddaughter spoke up, and she said, 'Mom, you don't know what you're talking about.'" The girl is about 11 or 12 years old. She said, "Mom, you don't know what you're talking about. It's very uncomfortable to be in those classes with the boys when this is being discussed. It should be the girls alone with the teacher and the boys with their teacher." I thought, everybody's talking in this province about who they are going to consult: They're going to consult the experts and the parents; they're going to consult the teachers and all of these different experts. Does anyone ever talk to the children?

Mr. Bill Walker: Grandpa Bob.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, Grandpa Bob.

I think the children should have a voice in this. I said to the minister at the time, "Out of the mouths of babes comes a lot of wisdom."

So I will be advocating that whoever this consultation group is going to be, I think that there should be some young men and women—young children—who are also selected in a wide consult to actually have some input into what exactly is being taught and what they think is age-appropriate and gender-appropriate—like the mixed classes. I know that it's a long time since I was in school in that age group, but I can't even imagine what it would be like even today.

I thought that was very important. I never heard anybody, in any of the articles I've read in the paper—and I've watched a lot of news interviews and shows: Steve Paikin and The Agenda and different ones. I've never heard anybody say, "What do the kids really think about this? What have the kids got to say about sitting in class with mixed genders and having to try to accommodate some ill feelings or uncomfortable feelings?"

I think that's something we should really take a look at, to make sure that we consult the children. I'm glad I had that conversation with that grandfather, as I'm a grandfather, and I'm glad he shared with the Minister of Education and myself that conversation that he had with his daughter and granddaughter. I think more of us should probably go back home and talk to our children and our grandchildren and say, "What's going on in the schools and what do you think about these conversations? Do you feel uncomfortable? Are you comfortable with it?" Some children would be more comfortable than others, depending on their background and how they were raised. I bet you that there are a whole lot of them that are very uncomfortable with this. So if anything, if we can resolve that—I don't think anyone has ever said—I'm running out of time here.

The latest missive I've seen from the Minister of Education is that they're not going to throw out every-

thing. They're going to take a look at whatever is possible there and they're not going to go right back to 1998. They're going to try to accommodate everybody and they're certainly going to listen to a wide, broad consultation. As the member for Kitchener Centre said, they will probably talk to those same people who talked to them before. I would hope they would. I hope that everyone would have an opportunity to have input into that, because I think it's a very serious issue. It's certainly something that's timely. Like you said, the Internet wasn't around in 1998 and it certainly wasn't around when I was in school, I know that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity today in the House to add to the debate, and hopefully we got something that—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We were still using inkwells.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Sorry?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: They were using inkwells.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, they were. I'll tell you, there were inkwells in the desks that I sat in. Yes, there were.

1730

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: The member opposite has described aspects of the throne speech which talk about improving access to health care.

Brampton is a city of 600,000 people. We have one hospital that was effectively underfunded the day it opened. Brampton is ground zero for hallway medicine. It has one of the busiest ERs in this country. Last year, over 5,000 people were treated in hallways because they couldn't get access to rooms. When I door-knocked, this was one of the most impassioned issues. This is something that really hurt people and affected individuals. It was almost traumatic in some cases, where people could not get access to the health care that they needed in a timely fashion because of these huge wait-lines and this overcrowded nature of Brampton Civic.

Now the PC Party under Doug Ford has campaigned on doing over \$6.2 billion in cuts. Brampton does not need cuts; Brampton needs investment. We need immediate investment in health care to stop these huge wait-lines and stop this overcrowding nature of our hospitals. We need to get Brampton Civic fully funded. We need to turn Peel Memorial, which is currently a health centre—it is not a hospital. We need that centre to be fully funded and to turn that into a hospital. And we need a third hospital in Brampton.

With these cuts that are coming forward, it's very worrisome. Constituents of my riding are talking to me, saying, "How are we going to get the remedy to health care that we need? How are we going to get the support that we so desperately need in our city to ensure these issues of hallway medicine and to ensure these issues of overcrowding are dealt with?" This is something that we need to address immediately. Brampton needs to have health care put at the forefront. We need investment in health care, not cuts.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: It's certainly good to be back. It's good to hear from two of our experienced members, the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and the member from Sarnia–Lambton. Quite frankly, it's very good to hear from all sides. We're addressing a lot of the same issues. We are, obviously, taking a swing at it from different perspectives. We need these fresh ideas. We can build on that.

What we just heard with these two speakers is a good summary of what's been going on for the last 15 years. Only the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound could summarize 15 years in 10 minutes. Of course, the affable member for Sarnia–Lambton, the king of the PMBs, as we have just heard, has a reputation. He's not afraid to disagree with something that maybe comes up in front of him, but he can disagree without being disagreeable.

Obviously, we detected a theme: "Promises made, promises kept." I'm afraid we are going to hear that phrase an awful lot over the coming months of debate. In many ways, I think that's really what people are asking us to do. We're elected representatives. Our job, very simply, is to represent those people who have elected us.

I came in with Mike Harris. I continue to hear from not only constituents, but so many other people—they may not remember the details of what went on 20 or 23 years ago, but very simply, when the name "Mike Harris" comes up, people will say, perhaps somewhat ruefully, "Well, he did what he said he was going to do."

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

Mr. Ian Arthur: It's a pleasure to stand again. I actually just wanted to start by—the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound offered congratulations to the folks who helped negotiate behind the scenes the leaving of the CEO of Hydro One. Thank you for acknowledging that it was a backroom deal.

It's easy to talk about the high-level problems and that the GreenON program was over budget, but again, that ignores the human side of it. From my constituents in Kingston and the Islands, it's the human side of it that I have been hearing about: those families who had entered into contracts in good faith, thinking that they were going to be able to upgrade their homes; those families who had scrimped and saved and could finally, with the help of this program, invest in their home and in the long run keep more money in their pockets through the energy savings that this program was going to provide to them. It is those people that I keep hearing from, and those are the people who are affected by the abrupt and unreasonable cancellation of this program.

It is also the business owners I am hearing from, those companies who have hired more staff, who are no longer going to be able to keep those people employed because they are no longer able to fulfill all those contracts they had entered into.

What is going to happen to those contracts? Is there going to be legislation from the government cancelling

all those contracts for those small business owners in Kingston and the Islands or helping those families who now are locked into contracts that they flat out cannot afford? It was unreasonable. It was done way too fast, and it is not taking into account, again, the individual people who are affected by the cancellation of this program.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? I recognize the member from Barrie–Springwater–Oro-Medonte.

Mr. Doug Downey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You clearly have that one memorized now and I appreciate it.

It just boggles my mind what kind of business would buy high and sell low. That's what has been happening in hydro. They have been spending a lot of money buying hydro and selling it cheaply to other markets, our direct competitors.

The member from Sarnia–Lambton really hit the nail on the head when he talked about it dividing communities and dividing individuals. It doesn't matter whether I sit in Maple Point looking over the north channel in Manitoulin or whether I go to the member's riding in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound or in my own backyard, farmers are divided against family and individuals are divided against friends and it's really not a healthy way to do business.

A former member of this chamber, who is no longer elected, not surprisingly, told me that of course the provincial government needs to override municipal authority on things like solar and wind because municipal politicians would never get it done. So they rammed it through municipal government levels and put these things in the ground. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I've reviewed several ground solar contracts and there is more devastation to come when some of the ground mounts are left in farmers' fields that used to be class A farmland. We haven't heard the last of this program, but we are putting a stop to it so it doesn't get worse.

I just want to say congratulations to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound on his re-election, and the member from Sarnia–Lambton, and I look forward to many more productive sessions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for final comment.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to thank the member from Brampton East. He was talking a lot about cuts. The only people who seem to be talking about cuts in this room today are the NDP. They must want cuts, because we're certainly not talking cuts.

Haldimand–Norfolk, thank you very much. He's been here for a long time and always adds great debate.

The member from Barrie–Springwater–Oro-Medonte: I think he's got a good head start on the word count already because we've got him up a fair bit in the House. He's looking pretty comfortable up there. Thanks for all your efforts and all your kind words.

I'm going to talk a little bit about Kingston and the Islands. He threw a bit of humour in and that's good. I

like that. I like to see someone who is paying attention to us.

But I'm going to acknowledge Mr. Rickford, our energy minister, who actually did do the deal and he got it done for the people of Ontario. The team that he had—I don't care what room he was in, he got the deal done and he came out and told Ontarians, "We're going to do what the Premier said we would do." So I applaud him in whatever room he wants to work in.

I want to remind the member, who wasn't here—and I'll give him credit for that—that it was his party that propped up the Liberal government twice on the Green Energy Act and the budget deficits they ran. So he may want to do a bit of homework on the backroom deals that were done there. I want to hope that he will actually support the businesses in his riding and the efforts that we're making to make it a more competitive climate—and giving money back to people to be able to spend in their community on the initiatives that we're initiating here in the House.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, our Premier stood up and said the CEO will be gone. Promise made, promise kept. He said the board will be gone. Promise made, promise kept. He said the Green Energy Act will be gone. Promise made, promise kept.

We're lowering electricity bills, cancelling unnecessary renewable energy projects to help lower bills. We're cutting business and personal taxes. We're reducing gas prices, ensuring long-term stable funding for our health care system by adding 15,000 new long-term-care beds, and putting \$1.9 billion into mental health, addictions and supportive housing. And we're actually making sure, as we promised, that the government will be accountable and trustworthy, something long missing in here.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of what we've done already.

Hon. Todd Smith: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Todd Smith: I'm seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business. Agreed? Agreed.

Back to the government House leader.

Hon. Todd Smith: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(a), the House shall not meet to consider private members' public business on Thursday, July 19, 2018.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Point of order. I recognize the member from Timmins.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You were going to say "James Bay." Old habits are hard to break.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): That's correct.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I realize, in the spirit of co-operation here, the government House leader—we had a chat about this, and we had cleared it. But from now on, I just want to make sure there is a written copy before it's actually read into the record so that we are clear about what the unanimous consent is about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much for the point of order.

I now ask for further debate.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always great to be able to rise in the House—and I'm not asking a question, so your head is safe.

Interjection: Okay.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to rise in the House, and specifically after the last election. I would, first of all—this isn't my maiden speech; it may feel like it because they're choppy at times. But I would like to thank all the people who supported me in the last election. I think, more specifically, I really would like to thank all the people in Timiskaming–Cochrane who voted in the last election—not just who voted for me but who voted for my opponents—because when we knock on doors, the most disheartening thing is when you meet people who don't care, who say, "You know what? It doesn't matter who I vote for." It matters.

A gentleman came up to me, and he congratulated me and said, "Once again, I wasted my vote because I didn't vote for you." I said, "No, no. You didn't." No one who votes wastes their vote. The people who waste their voice are the people who don't express their opinion. That's something I think we can all agree on, and something we have to keep pushing on.

Once again, I would like to congratulate the candidates who opposed me. Obviously, an election campaign is a partisan thing, but our election campaigns are always pretty above board, and I would like to congratulate the other candidates for that.

I spoke on it for just a few seconds this morning, but my riding is Timiskaming–Cochrane. For those of you who don't have a clue where Timiskaming–Cochrane is, the one place that everyone recognizes in Timiskaming–Cochrane, and specifically now, is Temagami, because Temagami is one of the most beautiful places in this province. Temagami and the region right around it right now are facing huge challenges because of forest fires. I mentioned it this morning, to thank the forest firefighters and all the others. There is a lot of planning that goes behind it. I talked about the bombers this morning and the other provinces that are coming to help.

People in northern Ontario have a lot of experience with forest fires. It used to be, when forest fires happened, people didn't come to help until after because everything was much slower. The greatest forest fire in our region, which burned a lot of Timiskaming down in one fell swoop, was in 1922. Many people died. At that time, the city of Toronto donated used streetcars—streetcars that were no longer suitable to use as streetcars—and

they sent them to Timiskaming, because that fire happened in October. A lot of families lived in those streetcars. That's how we used to co-operate. Now, thankfully, because our systems are much better and our communication is much faster and we actually have great firefighting systems, we can help each other before the damage is done.

Once again, I would like to thank everyone who has helped. We're not—and this pun is intended—out of the woods yet. But two Sundays ago, when we thought thousands of people were going to have to be evacuated, it was a whole different story than it is today. So once again, thank you.

What we're really talking about today is the throne speech.

I digress again. One of the things I like best—I actually like Thursday afternoons, because that's when we speak most off the cuff, and it's the least partisan. But I really like maiden speeches, because you learn about other people. Judging by some of the maiden speeches today, I'm going to have to step up my game, because I certainly don't look like someone who has seven years' experience here, compared to some of the maiden speeches I've heard today and compared to some of the experiences that have been brought forward. That's the greatest thing about the Legislature.

I'm a farmer by trade. When I got elected, I just assumed—wrongly—that almost everyone in the Legislature would be a lawyer or poli-sci graduate. It's nothing against lawyers: I've got a daughter who just passed the bar. I've got nothing against lawyers and nothing against poli-sci graduates. But the great thing about the Legislature is there are so many different life experiences. Often, a life experience is what actually makes decision-making better. We oppose the government. Actually, on a couple of things, I'm maybe—I'm not saying I'm never going to agree with the government. There are a couple of things that I think we can work together on. But life experience is really important.

One of the things that was mentioned in the throne speech that hasn't been talked about today—I'm sure it has been talked about otherwise, in the lead—is the challenges we face with the current government in the States regarding trade. It was mentioned in the throne speech. That's something where we all have to stand together, to make sure we are a united Canadian front on trade.

Autos were mentioned. There are a lot of people here involved in the auto industry, and autos are really important. But I'm a former dairy farmer. The only reason I'm not a dairy farmer anymore is because my kids didn't want to milk cows, and after two years of me being an MPP, my wife didn't want to milk the cows anymore either.

You will find out—for the new MPPs—that there are a lot more hours involved in this job than anybody would tell you.

Because of my 30 years of experience in the dairy industry, I know how our system is structured—I know

how important it is to the country—and also the differences between the American system and the Canadian system, and some of the things that really upset the Americans because they don't understand our system.

If you will recall, President Trump, a couple of times, has used a case—I can't remember if it's in Michigan or Wisconsin; I can't remember which state—where a dairy went down, and the 80 farmers around it had no place to put their milk, right? Those 80 farmers are out of business, and that was supposed to be Canada's fault.

Well, the difference between the American system and the Canadian system is that not only do we control our production, but we also pool our costs and our profits. So for the dairy farmers of northern Ontario, if we have a dairy go down in northern Ontario, that doesn't mean that the dairy farmers in northern Ontario or the dairy farmers in Ottawa or the dairy farmers around Woodstock lose their market. We pool our markets. Farmers pay for the milk to go to the next dairy. Farmers pay that transportation.

It happens that plants go down. If a plant goes out of business and we lose a market, then every dairy farmer across eastern Canada loses a little bit of their market. If a market increases, then for every dairy farmer in eastern Canada—eastern and western are divided—their market increases. That makes our system much more stable.

They don't have that in the States, and that's one of the big differences. Pooling is one of the big differences. Without pooling, there probably wouldn't be dairy farmers in northern Ontario, because our cost of production is lower but our cost of transportation—a lot of the milk that you drink here, or the cream you put in your coffee, comes from northern Ontario. But it costs a lot of money to bring the milk here. Dairy farmers pay for that, but all the dairy farmers pay for that, so we take an average. That makes a huge, huge difference.

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I'm going to keep plugging for Canadian supply management. I think we've all agreed—I think all parties have agreed—on how important the NAFTA talks are and how important supply management is to our country, and we're going to keep pushing together on that.

One thing about Canadian milk and the supply management system: Milk was local before local food was cool. A lot of people talk about local food, and the standards of food, and you want to be able to control what you're eating. The only way you can do that is to control your country of origin and control the rules of how that food can be produced. I can assure you that in Canada, as far as dairy products go, it's very strictly controlled.

As an example—I'll just take a couple more minutes on dairy. It's one of my favourite subjects.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mine too.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes.

Growth hormone, BST, was never legal in Canada. It's legal in the States. So you will not get Canadian milk with BST in it. If the border ever opens, there's no guarantee of that. That's why it's so important. It's food

security, food sovereignty. We were doing that before it was cool. So, on the trade front, where we can agree, we need to be one voice.

There is another issue, I think, coming from northern Ontario, that I heard in the campaign and that I heard some of the Conservatives talk about: bringing back the Ontario Northland passenger rail. If that was proposed, we'd be onside. We're going to keep pushing until it comes back, regardless of who is the government. But that's a good one.

A few areas that I personally really have a problem with—during the campaign it was proposed that the Tory government was going to do a line-by-line review of government expenses. I don't have a problem with that; that's a good idea. Anybody should do that. I ran a business for a long time. You always have to review your expenses.

It gets a bit fuzzy when you say you're going to hire your own independent firm to do that. We have an Auditor General's office that does that already. A lot of the Liberal scandals that you bring up, that we brought up when we were both in opposition, were brought forward very clearly by the Auditor General. Yet for some reason, the government doesn't really talk about the Auditor General. They talk about hiring their own independent review. The problem with that is, that's what the Liberals tried to do when they got in that fight with the Auditor General regarding the fair hydro plan. They also hired all the big accounting firms, who disagreed with the Auditor General.

It depends on what the terms of reference are for your review. If you make sure your terms of reference are directed toward the issues that you think are actually the problems, as opposed to getting a truly independent review like the Auditor General's, it's eerily the same as what the Liberals tried to do with the fair hydro plan. It's almost exactly the same.

It almost appears to me like the Ford government is starting off with as many problems as the Liberals ended up with, on the financial front.

You know the “promise made, promise kept” stuff? Great. I just heard one of the members say you know that you're going to be accountable. Promise made, promise kept—and here is how much it actually costs. Bang—put it on the desk. That's promise made, promise kept.

Interjection: That's accountability.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's accountability. That's not what we're hearing. We are hearing, “We're going to have a line-by-line review by somebody we hire”—by somebody you hire. And you're going to say, “Yes, but you guys are trashing these credible firms.” Not at all. They are credible firms, but they are going to use the terms of reference that the government determines. That's what they are going to do. That's not the same as the Auditor General.

Why don't you just take the Auditor General's reports and ask her, and take your areas where you think there are big problems—I think we could help you with that, where the big problems are—and say, “Okay, Auditor

General, look at this. How much bigger of a budget do you need to look at it?"

I almost get the feeling that you are somehow saying that you don't really trust the Auditor General, because you need to hire somebody else. I can assure you the Auditor General's office is pretty impartial—very impartial. They are officers of the Legislature, not officers of the government. You also have a Financial Accountability Officer which we worked very hard to get during the minority Parliament. Again, they are not partisan and they are tools at your disposal.

I didn't hear that. I didn't hear that in the throne speech. I heard a line-by-line review, but once again, you're not telling people who is setting the terms of reference. For most people, "Aw, who cares about it?" For stuff like that, and there are a few lawyers out there, you know exactly how important the terms of reference are, and the people behind the scenes know exactly how important the terms of reference are.

That's exactly the problem that the Liberals got into with the fair hydro plan. The Auditor General said the deficit is X, and the government of the day came back and said, "No, no, no. The Auditor General is wrong. The deficit is this. We're actually balanced because these three accounting firms said so." But their terms of reference were different than what the Auditor General was using. That was a big fight, and you guys are heading for the same fight at the very start of your term.

You know what? It's going to be better for us. It's not going to be better for the people of Ontario. But I can assure you that you are going to give us lots of ammunition. That's our job, to hold you accountable, and when I hear that this government is going to be accountable and trustworthy, okay, lay all the numbers on the table. The Minister of Energy, lay all the numbers on the table—how much it cost to have the board resign and to bring in a new CEO. Lay all the numbers on the table. That's accountable. If you were sitting here, you would be demanding the same thing of the government.

I've been here for seven years and I've listened to the members who used to be on this side demand exactly the same thing. It is very—"shocking" is not the right word—disconcerting that we are hearing exactly the same thing. When I first got elected, that's when the gas plant scandal—I just got elected and boom, the gas plant scandal hit. The gas plant scandal wasn't really that hard to understand. Contracts were signed between the government and the companies building the gas plants, and the government broke the contract, so the companies threatened to sue. The government, in an attempt to keep the companies whole, paid what the contracts would have been worth: one point something billion. It was originally \$40 million. Just like you guys are saying now, "We're cancelling all these wind power things." I agree: A lot of these shouldn't have been built. But the fact is they are built. So now you're saying it's going to save us \$790 million.

I remember former Premier, Premier McGuinty—"Oh, no, it's only going to cost \$40 million to cancel those contracts." The final tally was \$1.1 billion. Unfortunately, you are saying the same thing. But you've got a bit of a different caveat. Again, I'm not a lawyer. I'm a farmer. So you're saying, the way I read the legislation that was proposed today, that we are just going to indemnify the government from legal costs. Well, I'm not sure that's going to actually work. You maybe can do that provincially, but I'm not sure that's going to work federally or internationally. I'm not sure, if I was a company—to echo my colleague from Timmins—James Bay, I'm not sure, if I was a company—

Mr. Bill Walker: Just Timmins now.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, he lost James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's gone.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes. We won't tell you how we kid him nowadays, but—and now I've lost my train of thought. Mr. Walker, thank you.

Just trying to put forward legislation to indemnify yourself from legal costs is not going to solve your problem. It's maybe going to solve your problem in the short term, but it's not going to solve the problem for your tag line, "for the people."

My father—you are going to hear a few stories about my father over the next few years.

Mr. Bill Walker: A great guy.

Mr. John Vanthof: He was a great guy. I'm not sure he would have agreed with my turn in politics.

Mr. Bill Walker: Oh, I think he would. Uncle Ernie does.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, I'm not the only person here who has got a famous uncle or fairly famous uncle.

He's not here in the Legislature today—oh, sorry, Speaker—but the member from Oxford happens to be my uncle. We get along well—not on a political level, but we get along well.

I'm going to end on something that my father always taught me. He said that people who have to tell you they're honest—be careful, because people who are really honest don't have to tell you that they're honest. He drilled that into me, and do you know what? When I come into various offices now and I see all these plaques you guys put up saying "For the People," every time I read one of those plaques, I'm thinking, if a government has to tell you they are for the people—the red flags go up for me every time I see one of those plaques.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Just before I adjourn the House, I want to congratulate everyone who had the opportunity to partake in debate today. Your very first day of the 42nd Parliament is now over.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Therefore, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
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Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakabuski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry