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Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 3 October 2018

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 3 octobre 2018

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Let us pause for a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Todd Smith: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 36, An Act to enact a new Act and make amendments to various other Acts respecting the use and sale of cannabis and vapour products in Ontario, when the bill is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy; and

That the Standing Committee on Social Policy be authorized to meet on Thursday, October 11, 2018, from 12:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. and Friday, October 12, 2018, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. for public hearings on the bill; and

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 36:

—That the deadline for requests to appear be 5 p.m. on Friday, October 5, 2018; and

—That the Clerk of the Committee provide a list of all interested presenters to each member of the subcommittee following the deadline for requests to appear by 11 a.m. on Tuesday, October 9, 2018; and

—That each member of the subcommittee provide the Clerk of the Committee with a prioritized list of presenters to be scheduled, chosen from the list of all interested presenters received by the Clerk, by 5 p.m. on Tuesday, October 9, 2018; and

—That each witness will receive up to 10 minutes for their presentation followed by 10 minutes for questions divided equally amongst the recognized parties; and

That the deadline for filing written submissions be 12 p.m. on Friday, October 12, 2018; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 6 p.m. on Friday, October 12, 2018; and

That the Standing Committee on Social Policy shall be authorized to meet on Monday, October 15, 2018, from 9

a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That on Monday, October 15, 2018, at 5:30 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. At this time, the Chair shall allow one 20-minute waiting period pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Tuesday, October 16, 2018. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on Social Policy, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called that same day; and

That, when the order for third reading of the bill is called, two hours of debate shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill with 50 minutes allotted to the government; 50 minutes allotted to Her Majesty's loyal opposition; 10 minutes to the independent Liberal members, and 10 minutes allotted to the independent Green member; and

That at the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That, notwithstanding standing order 81(c), the bill may be called more than once in the same sessional day; and

That, except in the case of a recorded division arising from morning orders of the day pursuant to standing order 9(c), no deferral of the second reading or third reading vote shall be permitted; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Smith, Bay of Quinte, has moved government notice of motion number 10. Who would care to lead off the debate? The member for Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 36 and the time-allocation motion on Bill 36.

I should start off by addressing this fundamental function that has been—as we've gone through the debate on Bill 36, and we've heard lots of good debate on Bill 36—

some very thoughtful and appreciative comments from all sides of the House—what has always arisen during the debate is the recognition that we're under a tight deadline, a deadline that was enacted by the federal Parliament to create recreational marijuana in a legal sense.

I want to bring up that as we talk about that deadline it's important for us to understand what that all means. This Legislature has until October 17 to enact the rules regarding provincial jurisdiction on the sale of recreational marijuana. If we don't have that in place, then we have a real problem—a real problem—in this province in that we would have no laws regarding the sale and use of cannabis. So this is not just a deadline of October 17 in the abstract; it has real, serious consequences should this House fail to uphold our obligations enacted by the federal Parliament.

We've only had a short period of time. This government was sworn in on June 29 of this year, so that's about three months to put together the framework for the regulation and the legalization of recreational marijuana in Ontario. I think we've done a bang-up job in that short period of time—three months to put together one of the most substantive bills, and also a bill that recognized the significant transformation that is under way in this country with the legalization of cannabis.

0910

I commend the Attorney General and the Minister of Finance for both doing an excellent job in their consultations and getting the bill right. It's substantially different than what had been proposed under the previous Liberal administration in this province. This bill recognizes fundamental Conservative principles. As we've heard this debate—and we've heard, I will say, generally widespread support from all sides of the House, from the Green Party and Liberal members; I'm not sure where the NDP really are, but somewhat supportive—it's been generally recognized support for this bill, and I think it's because of sticking to those principles.

Instead of having a nanny state, a socialist state, a public operator for the retail of cannabis, we've gone and recognized that the free market is the best vehicle to sell and distribute recreational marijuana, but also to have those strong safeguards in place, both in the development or the authorization to operate a retail store, those functions, as well as the government and an agency of the government maintaining the controls on the wholesale side of recreational cannabis. So we got that right.

I think another thing fundamental principle that we should recognize: It recognizes the maturity of adults to make choices and decisions, unlike the previous incarnation of this bill. Let me just give you one example on that: In the previous bill, the use of recreational cannabis was restricted to a private dwelling only. There's been some discussion about this, but think of the consequences of only permitting it in a residential dwelling: the controversies, the complaints—and the legitimate complaints—that would have arisen from tenants. Tenants throughout this province would be upset—same with landlords—because people would be restricted only to their private residences, plus the opportunity to cause more harmful

effects on dependents of people who use recreational cannabis if we only allowed and permitted its use in a private dwelling.

I think we've got it right. We've tailored it so it works with the Smoke-Free Ontario Act in that we have safeguards for the public, so that the offensive natures or traits of smoking are significantly mitigated or minimized—not extinguished, but minimized. There's no use of recreational cannabis in playgrounds, school fields, sports fields or schools. So we've got a number of safeguards in place on where it can be used. Is it perfect? I don't think there's any such thing as perfection here as we take on this new recognition of legalized recreational cannabis, but we've struck a good and proper balance.

That also recognizes that under the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and the Municipal Act municipalities still have further opportunities should they determine it's wise to restrict recreational cannabis smoking in even greater places—beaches, wherever they may think it's important. So we've got some latitude there, but also the safeguards built in to begin with. We have to understand that in the context that law enforcement and none of us can distinguish between a recreational cannabis user and a medicinal cannabis user. Watching somebody on the sidewalk or hidden around the corner of a building having a joint—you don't know if that's a medicinal cannabis product or a recreational cannabis product. We have to keep those elements in mind when we craft our laws. Our laws must be enforceable, and they must be practical.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. I just wanted to interrupt the speaker for a moment. We're not allowed to have props on our desk, and I'm wondering if you could remove that for us, please. Thank you very much.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It was the first one. Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

Please continue.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Some of those products get heavy in the pockets, and I put them out on the desk.

Anyway, you cannot determine the difference between medical marijuana users and recreational users.

As you just mentioned, that product that I put in my pocket was a vaporizer. That can be used to ingest cannabis oils or it can be used to ingest other oils. There is no way anybody would ever be able to determine what it is unless they saw the person putting the fluid in or had a lab test. Law enforcement would never be able to determine if that was cannabis or something else. So harmonizing our recreational cannabis use with the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, and recognizing these, just makes good sense. It is the only way forward that we can do it in a practical manner.

There's a host of other things. I know the smoking of recreational cannabis causes a lot of people concern, but I will say this: It is my view that as technology continues to rapidly advance, technology is finding solutions and minimizing that offensive nature of combustibles or smoking—things such as vaporizers; things such as edibles and

oils. There are many ways to consume recreational cannabis which are less harmful than smoking, and we know that is a trend. I am sure that within a few years technology will continue to advance and the numbers of people actually smoking cannabis as cigarettes are going to decline ever further with the use of technology. Those are all things that we need to understand.

I think we also got it right, Speaker, on the retail side, where we've opened it up to the marketplace—having those safeguards in place, but also recognizing that this is a market opportunity for small operators, not just big operators like the LCBO or big operators like the government. This is going to allow individuals, mom-and-pop operations to invest and operate a cannabis store with the proper safeguards in place, creating some good and needed positive economic benefits for society as we move into this legalized recreational cannabis use.

0920

I think we also got it really right on the municipal side in permitting and allowing municipalities the latitude and the authority to make choices on their own. This is, again, something that was absent in the previous incarnation of this bill. Municipalities, if they so determine that it's worthwhile, may choose not to have retail cannabis stores in their municipality. I think that's proper. We've seen too often in the past where the provincial government has imposed obligations and imposed conditions on our municipalities and not given them an opportunity to make choices that they believe are more beneficial to their communities—so another good, strong, Conservative principle.

I'm also glad to see in this motion that, even though we're under this very, very tight timeline, this exceptionally tight timeline, there are going to be opportunities for committees to hear more. I know we've heard some good commentary around the Legislature on this bill and some good thoughts about how people may choose other ideas that may need to be or could be incorporated.

I think there's a real fundamental—putting a mandated two-year review into this legislation really hits it home. There, we're telling everybody, "We think we've got it right. We've done all our due diligence. We've put a lot of thought and a lot of consultation into this. But this is a new environment, a new reality, and we may not have everything 100%." We've incorporated a mandatory review of Bill 36 in two years' time. I think that is a very thoughtful and appropriate legislative approach to the legalization of recreational cannabis.

I will make one other comment, because it came up during the discussion, and I'll say this to the member from Timmins, because he had a thoughtful presentation on Bill 36. It was a personal reflection on recreational cannabis use. That is a story that is not unique to the member from Timmins. We have all heard of these stories, and there is evidence—whether or not it's overwhelming evidence—that excessive cannabis use in young and developing minds can have significant negative consequences, things such as mental disorders and schizophrenia. There seems to be either a correlation or some connection there. I think

it is incumbent, again, that we task our ministries and the federal department of health to thoroughly keep an eye on and survey and research how recreational cannabis is affecting our youth.

I think we've got it right: We've put those safeguards in to limit or prevent youth from engaging in this legal product. But, at the very end, it really comes down to all of us—all of us in our schools, all of us in this Legislature, all of us in our ministries—and every parent to make sure that their children are well informed of the consequences and well informed of the dangers. Even if a product is legal, it doesn't mean that there aren't consequences. That goes without saying. Cars and driving are legal, but they can be dangerous. We have to take those appropriate steps to facilitate its use but to safeguard against improper use or dangerous use.

I do think this is just the beginning. All of us will have to be outspoken and ensure that everybody knows they have a role in providing that level of education to our youth to prevent excessive use and prevent those negative consequences from happening. If our research and studies so demonstrate, then, of course, we have another mechanism to review and alter the contents of Bill 36.

I do want to just say one more thing, and the member from Ottawa–Vanier brought this up. It is a "permit but discourage" concept. And I think we got there; we got it right there. It is permitting—we have to permit the use—but we are not promoting its use. We have a very strong regulatory regime. Retail stores will have a number of safeguards to limit its promotion and exposure, but not so much that we continue to facilitate the underground and black market cannabis use.

It has been a tricky bill to get right, but I'm very thankful that the Bill 36 that has come forward seems to hit all the notes that we need it to in order to provide those safeguards, to provide the access, and also to get it done in such a tight, tight time frame: less than 100 days to do a substantive bill like this.

Speaker, it has been my pleasure to engage in Bill 36 and this time allocation motion. I look forward to seeing the bill pass shortly.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've got to say, the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston certainly has a very different demeanor and tone in debate as compared to what he had in opposition. I think he would have been apoplectic on this side of the House given any bill that came before us. It's kind of interesting to listen to the now tame member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston. Anyway, I leave it at that.

Listen, we're at time allocation. I don't want to take a lot of time. I know that our deputy House leader also wants to speak to this at some length as well. But I think there are a couple of things that need to be said here.

The first thing is, the government brings forward time allocation because they've put themselves in a time crunch. We know that by October 17, this month, pot is legalized, and it's not as if the government didn't know,

on being sworn in this June, that they had to have legislation in place about regulating the use of marijuana in the province of Ontario and the sale and distribution of marijuana. It's not as if they didn't know that this was an issue coming.

We know that the government took the time to call the House back for the Premier to change the composition of the election in the city of Toronto from 45 to 25 members using "notwithstanding" clauses. We sat until midnight. We moved heaven and earth this summer for the government to do its politics when it comes to the chaos that they created as a result of all of those initiatives, and never did the government bring forward a bill such as this that could have been before us back in August, could have been before us back in July. Then we could have allowed proper committee consultations in order to get the public to come in and tell us what they think of the legislation.

Are there aspects to this bill that make some sense? There are some parts to it that are actually quite okay; there are other parts that I disagree with. I think the distribution side of it is wrong. I think you should have followed an LCBO model—I spoke to that yesterday—and there are other items.

0930

The point I make is, the government created its own crisis here, and then they come before this House and they say, "Well, we have to have time allocation in order to move this bill forward because it's such an urgent thing. We have to have it done by the 17th. If anything was to happen, it would be a terrible thing." Then they would try to blame the opposition if we were holding up this bill, which we're not.

I just say to the government across the way, you can't pretend to be good managers and then bring forward initiatives such as this in the way that you have, because it really does reflect on your inability to run this House and to make the decisions that need to be made in this province in a timely way, and one that's more respectful. For example, I just listened to members yesterday in debate, and again this morning, where members got up in this House and said, "You know, this bill generally is okay but we know there are going to be problems. We know there is going to be some problem that needs to be fixed in the bill." How are you going to know that if you don't have proper consultation? So the government says, "No problem. We're going to do consultation," because the opposition has been pushing them and embarrassing them about not having any committee hearings.

The government chose, on its first number of bills, to move the bills directly from second reading to third reading and cut the public out all together. You can't pretend to be the government for the people when are you not willing to talk to the people. Finally, the government said, "Well, that is a bit of a problem," so they say, "We'll have two days of hearings next week, on Thursday and Friday during our constituency week." What about people who are living down in Windsor? What about people living down in London or people living up in Sioux Lookout or wherever it might be in this province who may

have something to contribute when it comes to this particular bill?

I'm not suggesting for one second, even if we would have called the bill in July, that we could have gone to every community in Ontario to speak to people about it. But we could have gone to the main regions in this province with the bill in order to hear from the police, mental health experts, addiction experts, the public and others who have something to say that would have helped us form a better bill. But the government said no: "We're too busy doing crises in other areas and we'll leave this until the end, and we have time allocation to do whatever we want at the end." This reflects on the inability of this government to be able to manage its affairs in a way that makes sense from a time perspective and from a quality-of-policy perspective. It just astounds me.

The Conservatives across the way say, "We know how to do things because we're big businessmen. We know how to run things. We're real good." You can't run this Legislature. How can you convince us that you can even run the decisions of the government at cabinet within your own ministries? To me, it's preposterous.

A government has two or three responsibilities. A majority government, and this is what happened in this case, with 40% of the vote the Conservatives got a majority—end of story. That's democracy that spoke and we all respect that. But with that trust that the public has given them—any party—you have a responsibility to govern for all the people, to make sure that the public is listened to, and to be thoughtful about what it is that you are doing.

Yes, every government is going to have ideological bills. Conservatives in power are going to have bills that are going to look very different than bills that we would have as New Democrats if we were in their place—fair enough; I don't have a problem with that. But my issue is, it's incumbent upon the government of the day to make sure that you respect the process so that you respect the people. Again I say, this government says, "I'm the government of the people." You're not for the people; you're only for your friends. That's really what it's all about.

There are all kinds of people in this province who want to be consulted on issues of importance such as this bill who are not going to get the opportunity because the government has gamed the process such that it's such a short period of time to try to pass a bill that is, quite frankly, pretty darn serious and needs to be done.

Nobody is disagreeing that it has to be done. The government has legalized pot. That's not our call, that was theirs; the federal government did it. We have to enact how you're going to sell the pot, where you can use it, and all that kind of stuff. But the government has put itself in a position where it has rushed the process, and by doing so is short-circuiting the policy perspective of what this bill could be, and is giving short shrift, quite frankly, to the public.

I've said this before and I'll keep on saying it: This Legislature is a body where we reflect what Ontario is all about. We all get elected from different parts of Ontario to

sit in this Legislature and to represent the people who are in our ridings—not just those people who voted for us, but all people in our ridings. We have a responsibility to them.

We're not always going to agree. All of us understand that at some point you have to make a decision in this House and vote one way or another. There are always going to be people in your riding who are going to like and dislike what your vote is. That's fair enough. I think most members in this House feel comfortable as long as we do our job of making sure that we listen to our constituents back home. What this government is demonstrating is that they're not listening to the constituents back home. They're just doing what the cabinet decides or, I would even argue, they're doing what the Premier decides.

What that corner office decides is what happens in this House, as we've seen in this House time and time and time again, with the government House leader being embarrassed having to bring motions in the House at the last minute to try to enact something that the corner office has come up with, and having to wear a face of embarrassment about how that puts him and his office in a position of looking as if they don't know what they're doing, or that they're trying to hoodwink the opposition or, more importantly, trying to hoodwink the public.

I just say to the government: You could have saved yourself a lot of embarrassment and you could have respected the people much better if you would have brought this bill forward sometime before now. You could have done it in July; you could have done it in August. You brought the House back twice this summer in the intersession. We all showed up to work. New Democrats were there. We have no problem coming here in the summer. We will come here whenever this House sits. But we could have actually put a bill in this House, had the six and a half or seven hours of debate and sent it out to committee so that people in this province could be heard. We could have gone to the various regions of this province to listen to what the experts have to say. I think you're not doing anybody any favours by moving time allocation on this particular bill.

As I said at the beginning, we don't have any intent of holding this thing up to any great extent, because we understand there is a timeline coming and this bill has to go through. As imperfect as it is, we need to move forward. I recognize that there's a majority on the other side of the House, as our leader, Andrea Horwath, and New Democrats do. We will have those political fights with you, but we understand that you draft the bills and you decide what's going to be in them. Our job is to try to hold you to account and to make sure that your policy decisions are those that better reflect what the people of Ontario want. I think by actions and the way that you've done this bill, you've given that short shrift.

Je vais prendre un couple de minutes en français pour faire un couple de commentaires dans la langue de mon pays, comme ils disent. Écoute, que le gouvernement utilise le bâillon démontre vraiment qu'ils ne respectent pas la population ontarienne. Ils disent, « On est le gouvernement du peuple », mais comment peux-tu être du peuple quand tu n'es pas préparé à écouter le peuple?

Le gouvernement avait tout cet été, au mois de juillet, au mois d'août, pour introduire un projet de loi sur le cannabis, pour être capable de dire : « Tiens ce qu'on propose et à quel point vous autres avez des idées pour mieux former nos décisions ici à l'Assemblée quand ça vient à ce que ce projet de loi veut regarder quand il est finalement fait. » Le gouvernement en place a décidé et a choisi de ne pas amener ce projet de loi cet été. Il l'a amené à la dernière minute. Là, ils rentrent à cette Assemblée et nous amènent le bâillon pour nous dire : « On va forcer une décision pour être capable d'avancer ce projet de loi dans une période de deux semaines. »

Écoute, le public, ils ont besoin d'être consultés. La police, les travailleurs en addiction, le système de santé : tout le monde qui est impliqué dans la question de l'utilisation du « pot » a quelque chose à dire. Puis on aurait pu produire un meilleur projet de loi qui était plus réfléchi si le gouvernement avait pris le temps de faire ce qu'il avait à faire cet été.

Moi, ça me dit et ça démontre que ce gouvernement ne sait pas comment gérer cette Chambre. Le bureau du premier ministre, M. Ford, décide tout. À la dernière minute, il s'en va voir le chef parlementaire, et lui, il reste avec l'embarras d'essayer de faire les affaires à la dernière minute. On se connaît comme amis, le chef parlementaire conservateur. Ce n'est pas la manière dont cette Chambre doit être gérée.

Je sais que ma collègue, la chef parlementaire assistante NPD, aimerait vous dire un couple de mots. Avec ça, je vous remercie pour votre temps dans ce débat.

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

0940

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: You know, it's kind of a pattern that I keep seeing over and over again that there's a lot of time allocation happening in the Legislature. As the member from Timiskaming—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Timmins.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Timmins, I should say—pointed out, it does speak to the lack of management skills around legislation. It truly does.

The poor House leader, who has to come and deliver those messages time and time again—I feel for him. I feel for him. I know his anniversary just happened recently, and he told me that he was talking to his wife on the phone. It's hard because maybe, if this House were managed better, he could have taken that night off and gone home and spent some time with his wife of 19 years, because I think she's put her time in.

Hon. Todd Smith: That's why it's lasted so long; I'm here all the time.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: That's right. They say distance make the heart grow fonder, so that's probably a saving grace for him.

So first, I would like to wish him and his wife a happy anniversary—

Interjection: Nineteen years.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, 19 years.

That's something that needs to be done, because it's important. Yes, this is the work of the Legislature, and it's an extremely responsible job that we have. We have to account for what we do, and we know what our role is here. But we also do have families. We have to acknowledge that those things are a reality of our responsibilities.

Talking about time allocation to this bill, it has been brought up—and it's a very good point—that this government called us back early. I'll tell you, New Democrats are hard workers. We are happy to be here when we are needed. When there's work to be done, we are the first ones at the table, we roll up our sleeves and we sit and make sure we don't leave that table until the job is done.

This government need to take a lesson from us, I think, in that respect. They could have—exactly what is being discussed: Instead of tampering with the Toronto elections bill, they could have made this a priority. We could have been talking about this, because it's a very serious milestone that's happening in this country. Cannabis is being legalized, and we need to be prepared in many aspects.

The member from Timmins—James Bay—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Timmins.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Timmins. It got switched. He made it very clear that the meddling or the tampering with that legislation really wasn't a priority of the people; it was a priority of the government. When you campaign on efficient government and then you just pull out legislation that you decide is what the people need, that is not good government. That is actually not even being transparent during an election.

We all knew this was coming. This was something that was coming to this Legislature. There were discussions prior to this. The previous government talked about putting 40 stores throughout the province. People had discussions about how that wasn't enough. They talked about putting it in a regulated facility, the LCBO, so we make sure that as it's rolled out we are taking a responsible approach. There is public safety and there is public health involved.

I can't imagine being in law enforcement and having to determine, if you pull someone over, what kind of test you are going to give them in order to determine if they're legally impaired and is it a medical thing. We know we have the Breathalyzer when it comes to alcohol, but we don't know what the real test would be for cannabis. That's a scary thing.

Imagine if you're pulled over—I mean, I don't know if that would ever happen to me, but imagine if you're pulled over and you are using it responsibly, and then the police officer has to administer a test, and the results are kind of sketchy; they're not clear. That could actually affect someone's life tremendously.

I think we forget that the legislation that we bring forward in this House impacts people's lives. I hope, most of the time, when we bring legislation in this Legislature, it's for the best and it's for the betterment of people. But, in this case, if you're that person, it could actually destroy your life, depending on what the outcome is. Nobody likes

legal situations where you have to defend yourself with respect to whether or not you've been impaired.

We can avoid that. We can avoid that if we have this brought forward. The opposition has pushed this government to at least two days of consultations during the constituency week. Again, it's not a full consultation. A government that's responsible to people—responsible to people—needs to make sure the people have an actual opportunity to give their feedback. When we do that, we're going to learn how to make legislation better. That means having law enforcement come and speak to us, discussing their barriers, discussing their suggestions. That means having health care providers come forward and talk to us about how long it's in your system, what the appropriate amounts are, the long-term effects, those kinds of things.

This is a new thing that is happening to us. I'm not educated around cannabis and what the long-term effects are, what the short-term effects are, the benefits of it medically—there are benefits, I've heard. That would be something I would value as a member of this Legislature: to understand the actual inner workings of what people face who use it, health care providers who have to prescribe it, people who have to sell it in the private market, their responsibilities.

Children—we know that in the 1960s—some members here may remember the 1960s; I personally don't recall them that much. The 1960s was a different time when it came around cannabis. People ingested it differently—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's very fuzzy.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's very fuzzy. Yes, that's right. It's very fuzzy.

But the youth who are here now, they're—we're using the vaping devices. A member kind of had it on their desk and it was a very bulky-looking item. I can tell you, I wouldn't be able to identify what a vaping device is because I haven't been in that realm of using that cannabis, medical or otherwise. But children, or even youth—I'm going to say young adults and youth. They don't look like that item the member had. They're sleeker. They look like USBs. They're small. They look like little race cars, they look like perfume, maybe a lipstick. As a parent—my children are older, but as a grandparent, as a concerned citizen, I wouldn't have a clue that somebody has that item and they are using it for recreational or medical purposes, so education is huge.

Before we roll out this legislation, I think that's part of the piece that has been missing. How well do we know what we're doing on this side of the Legislature? We had an opportunity to take a responsible approach. We had an opportunity to say, for an example, we could utilize a current system that's in place, a structure that's very responsible and proven very successful, which is the LCBO, but this government chose a different path. We are where we are but, come on, you're going to maybe create more legislative problems because you're not taking that initial model and then looking at how that works.

You could actually have put a timeline on it. You could have said, "Let's look at it for a year. Let's implement the LCBO model. It's responsible; there are professionals who

are trained. Let's look at that and try it for a year. Then let's revisit and let's look at perhaps there is room for expansion. Maybe we need to put more LCBO stores." That's my approach and I think that's the more responsible thing. It is a substance that people are going to be prescribed and use recreationally, and so is alcohol.

I think we have a role to make sure, as things progress in our society, that we are learning as we go, not after the fact. Like I said, when you talk about law enforcement and their challenges around whether or not to determine if someone needs to be charged and the person who is being charged may feel that it's unfair because of the testing—those things, then, will be challenged in court, and more problems and complications around legislation.

It is truly incumbent on us to make sure that we have to do it right. And doing it right—time allocation doesn't facilitate that outcome. It actually hinders our ability to do that. I can tell you, Speaker, when we talk about the government saying that they're for the people and they're the majority government—again, we respect the process of this House. We know that they can pass legislation based on their numbers. That's not the issue. But we can certainly speak our minds on this side of the House on how they determine decisions around their authority. So having consultation, having people being heard—again, the two days that it's happening, it's mostly in Toronto. What will be the opportunities for people outside of Toronto to come during that constituency week, as we call it, when we're out in our ridings doing a lot of the work?

0950

They're going to have a full consultation around sex education. They've got the snitch line; people can call in. They should have taken a better approach when it comes to cannabis legislation. The kids are going to school with these little USBs—the cartoons. We know they're going to school with those things. I have a colleague here who's a teacher, and she said that is happening. When that happens, teachers know what's going on. Why aren't we consulting with professionals to make sure we understand what's really going on in our schools? You want to understand how parents feel about health education and sex ed. I think we need to agree that everyone needs to be on board in all legislation, but then we need to understand how cannabis is building into that equation, because it is in our schools. Come on. Kids sneak cigarettes to school and think it's cool. Well, this is the new cool thing, I think. It's in their lifestyle, and it's now going to be legal.

My colleague brought up a really good point earlier: that people who smoke—are they joints? What do they call it?

Mr. Chris Glover: Spliffs.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Spliffs. "Joint" is the term that I know, but there's all kinds of other language around that.

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: No. I had no interest and still don't.

That's the terminology. If my kids were speaking like that—or young children—I wouldn't really clue in. I need

that education. So when we talk about parents being educated around sex ed, we need parents to be educated around cannabis use in this generation today—what it looks like when they're holding their canisters. What's the language around it? It really needs to be done.

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, there's another good point someone made: You can have the edibles. You can have candies—gummi bears—I heard that the other day, and cookies and brownies. That was the big joke back in the day; people brought brownies to your party. Again, that is a new level.

I have grandchildren. I'll say this with full disclosure: I don't know if I'll ever have those brownies, cookies or gummi bears around. It's legal now. But if you did, as a parent, you have to make sure those things aren't out there so that it's mistakenly given or taken out of—

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Edibles aren't legal.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Edibles aren't legal, someone just said. Jeez. There you go.

Miss Monique Taylor: They will be in one year.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: They will be in one year. So when that time comes, when they become legal, again, what is our responsibility as caregivers to children? Even when it becomes legal, you should be talking about, do we have education around how to lock that up so children don't have access to it at home?

It's important that we have these conversations when it comes to responsibility around cannabis, and we are missing that. We are missing the education piece. We don't know how these things affect our—well, we know. We say that you shouldn't have it until a certain age because of brain development. Do parents know that specifically? That's quite a challenge.

I think this bill is going to be quite a challenge in this generation, for parents to navigate how to do this. Now kids will go off and have a house party and they'll have alcohol under age. It happens; let's not pretend it doesn't. So this will be maybe the new thing. When a child comes home, you've got to say, "Hey, don't drive your car. Call me." Right? We used to do that. Parents say, "Look, if you're going to drink"—even of age; you're in college—"don't take that chance. I don't care what time it is. You wake me up, and I will be your Uber, your taxi to bring you home or to take you to a safe place." Now we're having the conversation about cannabis, and we need to do that.

Speaker, I am going to respectfully ask that this government conclude that we need more time on this bill. I know it's something they don't think is doable, but I think we needed the time—we still need that time. If they can come to an understanding, even creating legislation, after this piece, about education and responsibility and having those consultations—maybe do the work after the legislation is passed—I think it's really necessary.

Thank you for the opportunity to talk to this bill, and good morning, Speaker, and have a nice day.

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

Further debate? Further debate? Last call: Further debate?

Mr. Smith, Bay of Quinte, has moved government notice of motion number 10 relating to the allocation of time on Bill 36. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Orders of the day? I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Todd Smith: Good morning, Speaker. You look like you could use a coffee. No further business at this time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): This House now stands recessed, so I can grab a coffee, until 10:30.

The House recessed from 0957 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'd like to call the attention of the House to the fact that we have some special guests with us today in the Legislature. Joining us in the Speaker's gallery today are my sister, Debbie Jackson of Barrie; my aunt Ruth Arnott and uncle Keith Arnott of Barrie; and my uncle Earle Corbett of Toronto. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

I'd also like to welcome the former member for Perth–Middlesex in the 36th and 37th Parliaments, Bert Johnson, who is with us here today in recognition of Ontario Agriculture Week. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

Also with us today is Mr. Tae-In Chung, consul general of the Republic of Korea in Toronto. The consul general is here for the flag-raising ceremony celebrating Korea's National Foundation Day.

Finally, we have Ketel Jean-Philippe and Jacques Beauvil, members of Parliament visiting from Haiti, as well today. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature. It's a pleasure to have you with us.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature one of Canada's youngest and leading mental health advocates, Noah Irvine, and his grandfather Ross Irvine. Welcome.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm pleased to say the Canadian Cancer Survivor Network was here for breakfast this morning. The Minister of Health spoke at that breakfast.

We also had Julianna Leone, cancer patient advocate and survivor; her dad, Palmerino Leone, cancer patient and survivor; Doug Nugent, cancer patient advocate and survivor; Jennifer Hazel, cancer patient advocate and survivor; John Adams, Canadian PKU and Allied Disorders; Louise Binder, Save Your Skin Foundation; Cailey Crawford, Ovarian Cancer Canada; Kelly Gorman, Canadian

Cancer Society; and Jackie Manthorne, CEO and president, Canadian Cancer Survivor Network.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Hello, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome the delegation here today from the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association, specifically Mr. Ron Bohm, the president; Allen Wynperle, the president-elect; Laura Hillyer, the vice-president; and John Karapita, director of public affairs.

I would also like to inform members that they're hosting a reception today, starting at 5 p.m. in the legislative dining room.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I have a number of guests here today. First of all, it's a privilege to welcome Catherine Shearer, who is with McKenzie Lake Lawyers, from Guelph, an important member of the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association. Welcome to Queen's Park.

I'd like to welcome a long-time friend of mine, Ted Leckie, who's here visiting Queen's Park today. I'd also like to acknowledge Noah Irvine and his grandfather Ross Irvine, who are both from Guelph as well. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, like yourself, I would like to introduce Bert Johnson to the Legislature today. Bert was the MPP for Perth–Middlesex from 1995 to 2003. Bert was the member who introduced the private member's bill creating Ontario Agriculture Week, a bill that I was proud to support then and even prouder to celebrate today.

As we celebrate this week, I'd like to thank him for his work and success on this bill and, moreover, welcome him to Queen's Park once again. Thank you. It's good to have you here, Bert.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'd like to welcome, from the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association, representatives from my area, Windsor and Essex county: Greg Monforton, who is the past president of the OTLA; and Jennifer Bezaire, who is a board member of the OTLA. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Ms. Jane McKenna: It's a privilege to welcome Laura Hillyer and Claire Wilkinson from Martin and Hillyer Associates in the beautiful riding of Burlington, and members of the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association. On behalf of members of the Legislature, we welcome you to Queen's Park.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to introduce two great people from my riding of London North Centre.

It's my privilege to welcome Maciek Piekosz from Siskinds LLP, a board member with the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association. In addition to his busy law practice, Maciek also gives back to our community with his Helmets on Kids campaign and organizes an annual soccer tournament to raise money for charitable causes in the London area. On behalf of all members of the Legislature, welcome to Queen's Park.

The next person I'd like to welcome is Jane Kovarikova, a constituent in my riding. Jane grew up in the foster system from the age of six and was a crown ward at 12. She left the system at 16 with only \$600 a month from the government. Today, Jane is a PhD candidate in

political science and the founder of Child Welfare Political Action Committee Canada, an advocacy group dedicated to changing the Ontario child welfare system's outcomes. Welcome to the people's House, Jane.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: It's a privilege to welcome members of the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association to Queen's Park today. They have a delegation here: Ron Bohm, president; Allen Wynperle, president-elect; Laura Hillyer, vice-president; Linda Langston, CEO; and John Karapita, director of public affairs.

The association is having a reception this evening from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. in the legislative dining room. All MPPs and staff are welcome to attend.

On behalf of all the members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, I'd like to welcome you to Queen's Park.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It is my pleasure to welcome Evan Tanovich. Evan was a former page—my first page—five years ago, when I arrived here. He's now a student at the University of Toronto. Welcome back to Queen's Park, Evan.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I'm happy to introduce two constituents from my riding of Oakville today: Ms. Nadia George, who is an advocate for child welfare in the province of Ontario; and Mr. Sandev Purewal, who is a board member of the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association. On behalf of all members of the Legislature, we welcome you to Queen's Park.

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Before I introduce so many guests today, today is Korea's National Foundation Day. The Consulate General of the Republic of Korea will provide a free lunch of Korean food and a performance. Everybody is welcome.

The consul general was already introduced—and Hyeon Mi Lee, consul, Republic of Korea.

This Christian minister is a special guest: Rev. Hyeon Soo Lim. He was detained in North Korea for 31 months and finally rescued by our government.

—Mrs. Geum Young Lim, Rev. Lim's wife;
—Wan Soo Kim, publisher of Korea Daily Toronto;
—Pastor Hyung-Gu Tak, senior pastor at Haiti Korean church;

—Worllim Kim, Haiti;
—Ms. Yang Sun Kim, assistant to Rev. Lim;
—Woo Youp Song;
—Kwoi Youn Son;
—Sun Young Song; and
—Jeong Sung Lee.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Marit Stiles: It's a great pleasure to welcome a wonderful constituent from my riding, Carina Chan, who is here with the Child Welfare Political Action Committee. I know they'll be hosting members later today, and I want to welcome them all here today.

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: On behalf of the Honourable Lisa MacLeod, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services and minister responsible for women's issues, I have the honour to introduce and welcome the advocates, directors, managers and front-line staff representing:

—the Ontario Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth;
—the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies;
—the Ontario Association of Child and Youth Care;
—the Ontario Association of Residences Treating Youth;
—the Ontario Association for Family Mediation;
—the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses;
—Children's Aid Foundation of Canada;
—Children's Aid Society of Toronto;
—Children in Limbo Task Force;
—Children's Mental Health Ontario;
—Foster Parents Society of Ontario;
—Justice for Children and Youth;
—Simcoe Muskoka Family Connexions;
—Adopt4Life;
—WomanACT;
—YSM Cornerstone;
—Earncliffe Strategy Group;
—Tanner Steffler Foundation;
—Nottawasaga resort;
—Western University;
—University of Toronto;
—Wilfrid Laurier University; and
—youth raised in government care, even as far as Saskatchewan and New York City; and
—the many others who are here today.

1040

Miss Monique Taylor: It gives me great pleasure to welcome the Child Welfare Political Action Committee, who are here today lobbying for evidence-based policies in child welfare. The list of guests is long:

—Jane Kovarikova, as we've already heard;
—Meaghan Martin;
—Dr. David Bernstein;
—Dr. Rebekah Jacques;
—Christine Bradley;
—Paul Berendson;
—Amy Cote;
—Nadia George;
—Amelia Merhar;
—Carina Chan;
—Brittany Seaward;
—Carleen Joseph;
—Ingrid Palmer;
—Kristy Denette;
—Leanne Speight;
—Shannon Valriote;
—Stephanie Vizi; and
—Tom Randall.

I'd also like to welcome the 100 stakeholders who will be joining the political action committee today in room 228-230. I invite members of the House to join them.

Ms. Jill Dunlop: I would also like to introduce a member from the Child Welfare Political Action Committee from my riding of Simcoe North, Mr. Paul Berendson. Welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: It's a privilege to welcome Simona Jellinek from Jellinek Law Office Professional

Corp. and a board member of the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association. On behalf of all the members of the Legislature, welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Doug Downey: I have a special guest with me here today. Hale Mahon, who comes from my riding, is one of the most effective campaigners I've ever worked with. He's here with his grandparents Frank and Lois to celebrate his birthday.

Mr. Parm Gill: I'd like to recognize one of the pages from my great riding of Milton, Molly Jin. She's also the acting captain today. She is joined by her family: her dad, Baosheng Jin; Xueli Sun, her mom; and grandmother Guifen Liu. Welcome.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to welcome Maciek Piekosz, a constituent from London West who works with Siskinds. He is here today with the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Aris Babikian: I would like to recognize a bright young man, a page and acting captain also, from Scarborough-Agincourt, Eric Li. His mother, Jiao Jiang, was here earlier, but she had to leave.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, I've noticed that we have a good friend of the Legislature in the west public gallery today. Paul Kossta from OSSTF has joined us for today's proceedings.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: In the members' gallery today, I'd like to introduce Sherry Holmes. Sherry is a tradesperson, a TV personality and a champion of involving women in the construction field. On October 11, we will celebrate the International Day of the Girl. It was a pleasure to meet with Ms. Holmes this morning, along with the minister of women's issues, about ways this government can assist in ensuring that girls feel empowered to go into trades and other male-dominated fields. Joining her this morning is Gail Vent from Skills Canada, Greet Hussain from Holmes Group, Sue Wastell from Wastell Homes, and Seth Atkins from Holmes Group. Welcome. Thank you for joining us this morning and having a meeting.

Mr. Deepak Anand: I'd like to welcome Muhammad Alam from Alam Law Office in the great riding of Mississauga-Malton.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And if anyone wasn't introduced, we welcome you, as well.

I ignored the clock; I informed the House to allow all the guests to be introduced. But I would ask all members that if they're introducing a guest to keep it brief and to make no political statements while they're making introductions.

It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my first question is for the Premier. Last Friday, a woman named Christine visited Queen's Park to talk about the minimum wage. She works four different jobs, all of them paying the minimum

wage. Even working four jobs, she finds it hard to make ends meet. Raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour would make a big difference in her life.

Does the Premier think she deserves a raise?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Leader of the Opposition: Everywhere I go, no matter if it's small businesses, medium businesses or large businesses, they tell me that Bill 148 is a failed Liberal policy that is driving jobs and investment out of Ontario. Our Minister of Economic Development is reviewing Bill 148, holding round tables with stakeholders and investors to determine the best way to move forward.

I'll tell you, Bill 148 is the worst bill for the front-line hard-working people this province has ever seen. It is worse than the carbon tax. As a matter of fact, it's equal to the carbon tax when it comes to job-killing.

TD Economics predicts that Bill 148 will result in 80,000 to 90,000 jobs lost on top of the thousands and thousands of jobs that have already been lost.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, it's my understanding that the Premier is visiting Alberta on Friday. He might want to note that Alberta's NDP government just raised their minimum wage to \$15 an hour and, more importantly or as importantly, they're gaining jobs. They gained 16,000 jobs in August where this government lost 81,000 jobs. They're leading the country in GDP growth. He should learn those facts when he goes there.

One of the realities is that Christine is one of thousands of people who are struggling to get by on two or more minimum wage jobs. She's scheduled to get a raise in January. If the Premier thinks that's too soon for Christine to get a raise, how long does he think she should have to wait to get one?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Leader of the Opposition: We're actually protecting the minimum wage. We aren't touching the minimum wage. We're going to make sure we attract investment.

I can't wait to go out west and talk about the worst tax ever, about the carbon tax with Premier Moe in Saskatchewan. And then I look forward to visiting our friend Jason Kenney out in Alberta. Because Alberta has dropped so low, I predict Jason Kenney will sweep Alberta, bring proper reform in and create more great-paying jobs like we are here in Ontario.

This is about job creation. We said we're there for the people. We're going to continue representing the people by making sure we create an environment for great-paying jobs.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock.

Start the clock. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The last time the Conservatives were in office, they protected the minimum wage and froze it for eight years running. For eight years running, they froze the minimum wage and hard-working people suffered greatly under that regime.

But for Christine and thousands of other people struggling in tough jobs, the current minimum wage leaves

them falling behind. As she put it, “You can’t live in Toronto on that. You can’t live anywhere in Ontario on that. You just can’t. I’d like to say that’s after taxes”—this is still the quote—“but the truth is, I don’t earn enough to pay taxes.” Eureka moment: A young woman on four jobs earning minimum wage does not earn enough to pay taxes.

She’s looking forward to that raise, Speaker. Why does the Premier think that she doesn’t deserve one?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: If the Leader of the Opposition would like to sit down at the round table with my minister and listen to the job creators, listen to the small businesses, listen to the medium and large businesses that—Bill 148 is a job killer.

We’re going to protect the minimum wage. We’re going to protect the front-line workers by lowering their hydro rates, by lowering their gas by 10 cents a litre, making sure that we thrive in Ontario.

1050

We have seen 300,000 jobs leave Ontario. The biggest concern—Ohio is terrified, Michigan is terrified and so is New York state, because we’re going to be more competitive than all of the states that we’ve lost the 300,000 jobs to.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. The law in Ontario allows working people to take up to two paid sick days when they are ill. Does the Premier think Christine and working women and men like her should be able to take a paid sick day when they’re ill, or is that a benefit that he plans to take away?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: We’re going to send a clear message to the world that Ontario is open for business. We’re going to make sure we have attractive incentives for businesses to come to Ontario, because we will be competitive. We’ll create thousands and tens of thousands of jobs.

I’ll never forget when I went to Renfrew—Minister of Transportation John Yakabuski. I saw 20 people with disabilities come up to me and say, “Doug, I lost my job because of Bill 148.” These are young people and young adults with autism. Thousands across the province lost their jobs because of Bill 148. Students lost their jobs because of Bill 148.

We’re going to create jobs. We’re going to make sure we hire students, hire people with special needs. We’re going to support the front-line workers of this province. We’ll make sure they thrive in this province.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Members take their seats.

Start the clock. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it’s really taking the province backwards when a Premier believes that “open for business” means being punitive to workers. I think you can have both. I think you can have a province that is open for investment and business but at the same time treats its workers with dignity and respect.

The law in Ontario allows working people to take leave to care for family members in an emergency without losing their jobs. Does the Premier think Christine should be able to care for a sick family member in an emergency and still keep her job, or is that a protection that he plans on taking away?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I just want to remind the Leader of the Opposition that there are 385,000 regulations here in Ontario. Those are job killers.

We have a round table put together, and I encourage the Leader of the Opposition—rather than penalize companies, small companies, medium and large companies, why doesn’t the Leader of the Opposition sit around the table? The red tape—we’re going to cut the red tape. We’re going to cut the regulations. We’re going to make sure we make Ontario open for business.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, I’ve been talking about sick days, I’ve been talking about emergency leave, and I certainly haven’t heard the Premier once stand up for everyday working people and say they deserve a fair shake in the province of Ontario.

Too many people in this province are falling behind. They fell behind when the Conservatives were in office and froze the minimum wage for eight years. They fell behind for 15 years under the Liberal government.

Raising the wage to \$15 an hour in our province, allowing people to take a sick day and care for loved ones are ways to ensure that hard-working people can pay the bills, can pay the rent and see their families. These are things that we would expect any worker to be able to enjoy.

This is not Victorian England, Speaker; this is the province of Ontario in 2018. Why is the Premier opposed to things like a \$15 minimum wage, paid time off when you’re sick and making sure people can take an emergency day off when their family needs them?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I just want to remind the Leader of the Opposition of the Rae days, the NDP days, when hundreds of thousands of people, 700,000 people, lost their jobs. They increased our debt by \$60 billion. That was the beginning of the end of the NDP. We saw five years of destruction under the NDP.

We’re turning the corner. We’re going to be the most prosperous province in the country. We will thrive with opportunity and prosperity, the likes of which this province has never seen.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Almost a year ago today, the health minister for the Liberal government proudly announced that they would be investing \$100 million to help hospitals deal with crowded hallways during flu season. A year later, patients are still stacked in hallways, but it’s a Conservative government making the same empty announcement.

Patients languishing in hospital hallways expect real action. Why is the government offering Liberal band-aid

funding repackaged as a Conservative plan, instead of doing something tangible to end hallway medicine for good?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: As the leader of the official opposition knows, one of our primary campaign commitments was to end hallway health care. We are working on that each and every day. We also have an advisory council that is advising the Premier and me on steps that we can take, because it's a multi-faceted problem. It involves moving patients who are alternate level of care and who don't need to be in hospital to appropriate places, long-term-care homes. That was another one of our major commitments, which we are also working on.

It's also about developing a comprehensive mental health and addictions system so that people don't need to be in crisis and have to go to emergency departments, that they can receive care in a proactive way.

We are working on both of those issues right now. We are investing more money into it, and we have a further announcement after today. We will have an announcement that we will be making with respect to that specific issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I may be incorrect, Speaker, but I think what the minister was acknowledging is that the \$90 million is not for hallway medicine. Patients who need care are left sometimes for days in hospital hallways. I saw this myself when I visited Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, where they've been operating at surge capacity for years now. Instead of help, the Conservatives offered cuts to mental health funding and to the opioid crisis, all of which force people—guess where, Speaker?—back into emergency rooms.

Does the Premier really believe that warming up the same tired Liberal plan is going to make a difference for patients stuck in hallways in hospitals?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Through you, Speaker, to the leader of the official opposition: You are not correct with what you just stated. We are investing more money. We are investing money into our mental health and addictions system, which is an increase—\$3.8 billion over 10 years is a major increase. It's going to be a comprehensive and coordinated system to get people the help that they need.

But we also do recognize that with flu season upcoming, a lot of the hospitals that are already at 100% capacity are going to face additional stresses and strains. We have dealt with that, we have a plan with that, and we will be announcing that later today. So I hope you will be listening to that announcement.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mrs. Amy Fee: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. The constituents in my riding followed the free trade negotiations between Canada, the United States and Mexico closely.

Hundreds of thousands of jobs across Ontario depend on free and fair trade with our largest trading partner.

Nearly nine million American jobs depend on Canada-US trade and investments, and approximately 400,000 people and \$2 billion in trade travel across our border every day.

Continued uncertainty for our dairy farmers and steel producers is of great concern to our Premier and to myself and the people in my riding. Can the minister please inform the Legislature how our government for the people is protecting job creators like Toyota in Kitchener South-Hespeler?

Hon. Jim Wilson: I thank my honourable colleague for the very good question. Like the member for Kitchener South-Hespeler, I was fortunate enough to tour with her this summer the Toyota plant in her riding and met with the workers and the management. We were very much impressed with the work that they do and the cars they produce. They've won many international awards. In fact, they're one of the companies in the world that has won so many awards in the automotive sector. The workers asked us to look after their jobs and protect their jobs, and that's exactly what our government for the people has been doing. We do that every single day.

1100

More recently, we're disappointed the federal government hasn't been able to get the tariffs taken off of steel and aluminum. That's starting to affect companies like Toyota. So there's more work to be done. Premier Ford will be there. I'll be there. I know the honourable member will be there. We will protect those jobs and stand up for Ontario workers.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mrs. Amy Fee: Thank you to the minister for his response. I appreciate the work our government is doing to protect the auto industry and, by extension, the Toyota plant in my riding. I was certainly honoured to tour that facility this summer with Minister Wilson, parliamentary assistant Skelly and MPP for Cambridge Karahalios.

Parliamentary assistant Skelly has also been speaking to businesses, large and small, and to workers across the province, including in my riding, on trade relations between Canada, the US and Mexico. After 13 months of uncertainty surrounding free trade with the United States and Mexico, it is positive to see a deal and to know that our government stood up for the people every step of the way.

Can the minister please inform the Legislature what work is left to be done?

Hon. Jim Wilson: Thank you, colleague. Indeed, we have mixed reviews on the new NAFTA. On the one hand, as the honourable member said, it's good news that they settled the threat of future tariffs on auto and auto parts. There's a special section to protect us against 232, should the US ever decide to do that; they can't do it under NAFTA. However, the 1962 law on national security allows them to continue, in spite of NAFTA, to put punitive tariffs on steel and aluminum—they're there today—and on any other commodities or services that they may want in the future, and the heck with NAFTA.

So the federal government left a NAFTA that you can drive a truck right through—hopefully a Toyota truck—because of these 232 tariffs. So what work is left to do?

They have to get back to the table before they sign this deal at the end of November and look after those punitive tariffs.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

For years now, hospitals throughout our province have been operating at over capacity. That means that every night there are thousands of Ontario patients who are crammed into bathrooms, shower rooms, TV rooms and storage closets, anywhere you can fit a bed or a stretcher. In Sudbury, Health Sciences North is presently at over capacity, and they are expecting a surge with the flu season just around the corner.

The Ontario Hospital Association tells us that they need a minimum of \$300 million just to maintain what we have, not to fix it. Does the minister believe that \$90 million, shared between 150 hospitals, will fix hallway medicine in Sudbury and prepare them to care for us when the flu season surge starts?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. The fact is, we are aware that many hospitals across Ontario are operating at over 100% capacity, and this puts good patient care in jeopardy with the flu season approaching.

Any one patient who is being treated in a hallway is one patient too many as far as I'm concerned. They deserve better. Many are seniors. They deserve to be treated in a proper hospital room, and for the health care professionals who are tending them, that is not the kind of care that they want to provide either.

We have anticipated the flu season. We are providing relief across Ontario. We are injecting \$90 million into it, but there is more than that. We will be making an announcement about that shortly after noon today. Should you have any questions following that, I would be very pleased to answer them.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thunder Bay regional hospital, like so many other hospitals, has been operating at over capacity. Last January, they had 447 patients and 375 beds. I'm strong in math, Speaker: That's 72 patients who were cared for in corridors, bathrooms and TV lounges, anywhere but a hospital room. The situation in Thunder Bay is still very dire as they continue to try to provide quality care while providing hallway medicine. Let me be clear: You cannot provide quality care in a hallway. It is not possible.

Does the minister think that investing in 1,000 beds among 150 hospitals will fix the hallway medicine crisis in Thunder Bay and will prepare them for the surge with the flu around the corner?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Well, I would say to the member that this is a situation that has been growing over a number of years. This didn't just happen after June 7; it's been growing for 15 years. We need to deal with that. There's not going to be one simple solution that's going to

come forward that we're going to be able to instantly end hallway medicine.

I agree with you: No one deserves to be treated in a hallway or a storage room. We are taking steps to deal with it. It is a multi-faceted problem. It does involve people who are ending up in emergency departments but can't get to a room because of the alternate-level-of-care patients who don't need to be in hospital but can't go home. They can't get enough services and there's no long-term-care home for them to go to. We have to build in steps along the way to make sure that patients get the care that they need.

We are working on it. Are the steps we're going to take today going to end hallway health care? No, unfortunately not. We are working on a long-term health capacity plan that we will be working on and bringing forward over the next few months—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Next question.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Christine Hogarth: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Our government for the people is committed to creating and protecting Ontario jobs by sending the message that Ontario is open for business. After 15 years of failed Liberal policies and a radical NDP that voted for the former government 97% of the time, Ontarians, on June 7, voted for relief. Well, relief is here. Could the minister please inform the Legislature of the details surrounding Shopify's recent investment announcement in Ontario?

Hon. Jim Wilson: Thank you to the honourable member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore for the question. I was pleased and our government was pleased at Shopify's recent announcement. I was pleased to tour Shopify this summer when I was in Ottawa, and last week Shopify announced its plan to invest up to half a billion dollars in a new Toronto office. This office will be home to thousands of new employees.

Our government for the people is thrilled this expansion is taking place right here in Ontario. You know Shopify had the world to look at, and they chose Ontario, and they made that decision after we came to office on June 7 and a series of meetings that we had. So we are very, very pleased that Shopify has gotten the message that Ontario is open for business.

In the supplementary, I'll mention some other companies that have gotten the message that Ontario is open for business.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Thank you to the minister for his response and for all the great work you're doing to get our economy in Ontario moving once again.

Every day over the last many years, I have heard in the riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore and all across this province that life under the previous Liberal government had gotten far too expensive. That is why our government for the people is cleaning up the hydro mess, consulting with businesses on red tape and lowering taxes. Can the

minister inform the Legislature of recent investments in Ontario?

Hon. Jim Wilson: I thank the honourable member. I should note that Shopify is making this half-a-billion-dollar investment in Ontario without a government handout. Those days are over. They're doing it because they have our assurances and the word of the Premier of Ontario and all of our caucus on the PC side that we are going to cut red tape. We are going to make the regulatory environment easy for businesses to create jobs. Ontario is open for business and all that entails, including Bill 148, I say to the people on the other side.

As I've already mentioned in this Legislature, Amazon and Instacart have both recently announced major investments across Ontario. CBS Television Studios, just this week, announced it will open a 260,000-square-foot production hub in Mississauga, and APAG Electronik, an automotive electronics and lighting company, is setting up its headquarters in Windsor, creating 148 jobs.

Together, these announcements mean thousands of new jobs, good-paying jobs, across Ontario. Mr. Speaker, jobs are our number one priority, and we're not going to give up until everybody who works in this province has a job.

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NIAGARA PENINSULA CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

Mr. Jeff Burch: To the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks: Last week, the Auditor General released a special report on the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority. The report shows that the NPCA is having difficulty fulfilling its mandate. It is plagued by financial mismanagement, a high employee grievance rate, and conflict-of-interest issues. We've seen the NPCA fire key staff, censure board members, lobby the government to develop on provincially significant wetlands, and even sue a private citizen. The Auditor General herself recommended that the province could do more to oversee the NPCA.

Will the minister hold the NPCA accountable and appoint a supervisor to oversee the implementation of the Auditor General's recommendations?

Hon. Rod Phillips: I thank the member for his question. As not everybody may know, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts asked the Auditor General to look into the NPCA as a result of some concerns that were raised. That report was delivered last week by the auditor. I do want to make sure that we thank the auditor for her recommendations. They were a very balanced set of recommendations. We have reviewed them and are going to be working with municipalities to see where we can support conservation authorities better in terms of the governance of those authorities and how we work with them to make sure they have the resources involved.

I should say, Mr. Speaker, that we are assured, both by the auditor's reporting and her review as well as the other work we've done, that the concerns that were raised in Niagara are not concerns we have for all conservation

authorities. But be assured we take the report very seriously. We have reviewed the recommendations and will be working with municipalities, including in the area, to support the conservation authorities.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thanks for the response, Minister. Former MPP Cindy Forster has asked the previous government to intervene in the issue of the NPCA since 2014. Conservation authorities are created to advocate for conservation in order to maintain the balance between the environment and development.

Speaker, the NPCA continuously advocates for the latter. One of the most troubling findings in the audit is that the NPCA is not responding to local complaints when the conservation act is violated. It's clear we need a supervisor, a clean sweep of the board, and changes to the conservation act to ensure that at least 50% of the board are community members with a working knowledge of conservation.

To the minister: Is he prepared to make these changes and work with local area MPPs to implement the Auditor General's recommendations?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member: To be clear, the Auditor General's recommendation was that there needs to be work done. I was pleased to see that the conservation authority in question did embrace the recommendations and has agreed to and is already implementing a number of them.

There are interesting issues raised by the Auditor General with regard to governance; in particular, the role of board members vis-à-vis their municipality and the conservation authority and how they need to approach that in the future. We are looking closely at those items and will ensure that we work with municipalities to make sure that the 36 conservation authorities across the province are well-managed and governed.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'll direct my question to the Minister of Economic Development. Minister, I think your government is making a false choice between supporting small businesses and minimum wage workers. Raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour makes life more affordable for families and provides them with more money to spend in the local economy supporting local businesses, and lowering payroll taxes on small businesses provides them with immediate cash-flow relief to create more jobs and to pay higher wages.

I ask the minister if the will government support local job creation by committing to lowering payroll taxes on small businesses by doubling the employer health tax exemption, and at the same time raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour on January 1.

Hon. Jim Wilson: Thank you to the leader of the Green Party for the question.

We just had the most significant lowering of payroll taxes in my 28 years here with a \$1.45-billion injection into businesses, particularly small businesses, with the

decrease in the premiums of the WSIB. That's the largest investment I've seen in job creation in years. The books are balanced now at WSIB so premiums can come down, the Minister of Labour tells us, an average of 30%, some sectors much higher than that. That's fantastic news.

As part of our initiative of Ontario's open for business, I know that our hard-working finance minister, Mr. Fedeli, is looking at every tax we have and every burden we bring in, as I'm doing, as my parliamentary assistant Mike Parsa is doing, to make life easier for small and medium-sized businesses.

The greatest dignity we can give a human being is the opportunity for a job. That's what we believe; I believe your party believes that. Stand with us to create jobs and not lose jobs like we saw under the previous Liberal government.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The House will come to order.

Hon. John Yakabuski: Stand with us, Mike. We know you want to be here.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Transportation will come to order. I can hear you.

Start the clock. Supplementary?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Minister, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business for years has been calling for lowering payroll taxes on small businesses by increasing the exemption level for the employer health tax. At the same time, raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour will put an additional \$2,000 in the pockets of minimum-wage families. Both of these policies provide more money for small businesses to create jobs and more money for local workers to spend with small businesses in local economies.

I ask again, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: Will this government support minimum-wage workers by raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, while supporting small businesses at the same time by lowering their payroll taxes?

Hon. Jim Wilson: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you for the question. Everything that we have done is for the people. We are bringing relief for families; we are returning prosperity to the people of Ontario. As Minister Wilson said, we're open for business: some \$1.5 billion back into businesses to reinvest through the WSIB; scrapping the cap-and-trade, putting \$285 back into families; lowering the gas by 4.3 cents on its way to 10 cents a litre; lowering corporate tax rates from 11.5% to 10.5% so those businesses can hire again; lowering the small business tax rate by 8.75%; a 20% tax cut for middle-income families; hydro rates going down 12%; getting out of costly wind and solar projects, saving \$790 million over 16 years. That is all about bringing real—real—relief to families.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Order.

Start the clock. The member for Mississauga Centre.

CURRICULUM

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: My question is for the Minister of Education.

This week we learned that for the third time in history, a woman was awarded the Nobel Prize in physics. That woman is Canadian-born Dr. Donna Strickland. From Guelph, Ontario, Dr. Strickland is an associate professor of physics and astronomy at the University of Waterloo. Her work has mostly been focused in the laser physics field. Alongside her colleague, Dr. Mourou from France, she developed technology known as chirped pulse amplification. This work has led to a number of inventions that we are all familiar with such as laser eye surgery. Dr. Strickland is a testament to the potential of her students, and girls, right here in Ontario.

Can the Minister of Education tell us what our government is doing to ensure that Ontario students will continue to be global leaders in subjects like math, science and technology?

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Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you to the member from Mississauga Centre. She, herself, is a wonderful role model for girls and women throughout Ontario.

I'm proud to stand up on behalf of the Premier, the PC government and as Minister of Education to recognize and congratulate Dr. Strickland for her incredible achievement. As we heard earlier today, October 11 is the national day of girls, and it's important that we recognize our role models.

Her success is also a tribute to the calibre of academics we need right here in Ontario. Since day one, it's the PC government that has been committed to providing that quality of education. In today's world, our needs are constantly evolving. It's important that we provide world-class education fields like STEM: science, technology, engineering and math.

We've already started by scrapping discovery math, a failed method of teaching that only left our students behind. In Ontario, we have some of the best teachers in the world, but it's up to the government to set the baseline for what students should be learning, and we're doing—

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

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: Thank you for that response and thank you for all the hard work that you are doing to ensure that our students succeed today and tomorrow.

I am happy to hear about how important teachers are to this province. Many of my good friends chose teaching as their vocation, and I am so proud of the work that they do in inspiring students to reach their full potential. I am equally as pleased to see that as part of the education consultations, parents can tell the government about a teacher who has gone above and beyond to support their child's learning.

However, Mr. Speaker, parents in my riding have also expressed their interest in doing more to ensure that their

child is prepared for the future, especially when it comes to skills and subjects like math, science and technology. I think we can all agree that parents, guardians and student support systems are the most important partners that we have in education.

Can the minister explain how the government will continue to involve parents in their child's education?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: There's no doubt that in order to prepare our students for the future, we need to support students starting right here within our homes across Ontario. Our approach is a simple one. It's all about getting back to the basics.

We've provided parents with a facts sheet so that they can be engaged as well, outlining learning expectations when it comes, specifically, to mathematics. This facts sheet suggests how parents can involve their children in everyday opportunities to learn the fundamentals about math. Whether it be at school or at home, there's always an opportunity to engage children in mathematic fundamentals.

Our government believes that it's attitude and plans for the education of our children that will prepare our students for success like Dr. Strickland's. Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind every member in this House that our education consultations are now open. We're welcoming written submissions, and we're encouraging all parents, teachers—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you.
Next question.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Yesterday, we heard a lot of talk from that side of the House on what the federal government needs to do to support our dairy farmers in the wake of the renegotiated NAFTA agreement, but what we didn't hear was what this government is prepared to do and going to do to help farm families who have been hurt by this deal.

This government talks a big game about supporting our farmers. Here is your chance to actually prove it. Will the minister step up to the plate and support our farm families if federal support is not forthcoming?

Hon. Jim Wilson: Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I thank the member for the question. Obviously, it's a grave concern with us about the impact that this trade agreement will have on our farming communities. The farmers are the bedrock of our communities. When one sector of the economy in rural Ontario is hurting, the whole community is hurting.

As we started this process, we had a federal government that said that they were going to stand with them, protecting our supply-managed sector in our society. We said that we would stand shoulder to shoulder with them. They've let us down here.

They've also now said that they are going to make us whole by presenting a funding package that will in fact cover the cost of the impact this trade agreement will have

on our rural communities, and we will hold their feet to the fire. The Trudeau government has a responsibility to live up to the cost of their actions.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: With all due respect, Speaker, the members of the opposition don't have the same blind faith in Justin Trudeau to come to the rescue as the Minister of Agriculture does.

The question is back to the Minister of Economic Development: If the government is not going to do anything to help support our farm families, maybe they'll do something for our steel and aluminum industries. The steel and aluminum tariffs have been in place since June 1. Other provinces have stepped up and offered support for their producers, but Ontario so far has done absolutely nothing. Will the minister commit today to developing a support package for Ontario's steel and aluminum producers now that we know that those tariffs will continue to be in place?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I refer it to the minister—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): You can refer it back.

Hon. Jim Wilson: Thank you. I just say to the honourable member across the way: O ye of little faith.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Defending Justin Trudeau? Oh, my God.

Hon. Jim Wilson: Well, the Prime Minister has put forward \$2 billion to offset the damage that's been done with US tariffs on steel and aluminum.

The premise of the question, that Ontario has to do anything—I, this government, moments after we got the text of the agreement on Sunday night and all of Monday, were the only ones in Canada saying, "Hey, he's left us out to dry on dairy?" It took a couple of days before other people stood up. And we pointed out the truck that you can drive through NAFTA, which are these punitive tariffs, beginning with steel and aluminum and God knows what else they feel like doing in the United States to hurt our economy, to drive jobs to their economy.

We're the ones standing up for jobs in Ontario and, in fact, for jobs in Canada.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There you go propping up the federal Liberals again.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Timmins, come to order.

Start the clock. Next question.

IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE POLICY

Mrs. Nina Tangri: My question is for the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. I, like many of my colleagues in this House, have had requests for assistance from individuals who have come to Canada through proper immigration channels to work in fields where we have a shortage of skilled trades. We welcome

people who want to work hard and contribute positively to our economy.

As a prime example of how the federal immigration system is ineffective, an individual case caught my attention. This individual went through the legitimate application process and obtained a work visa. Unfortunately, through a minor clerical error, this individual and his family will be deported this Friday. As a result, we were told that immigration Ontario cannot assist with his claim, but that it must be referred to the federal level.

Mr. Speaker, what is Ontario doing to help legitimate immigrant claimant issues?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the member's question from our side of the House. As I previously mentioned on this matter, Ontarians are quickly losing faith in the federal government's ability to handle issues at the border, our immigration process and the refugee process.

I'll remind this House that the federal government has sole jurisdiction over border security and refugee claimants. That's why we're calling, as a part of this government, for the federal government to pay \$200 million and growing as a result of the pressures on our social assistance costs, temporary shelters in our two largest cities, \$20 million and growing in education costs, as well as additional costs with respect to legal aid, child welfare and the Red Cross.

I will simply continue to call on the federal Liberals to fix their flawed system so that legitimate claimants will have a shot at actually getting in.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnett): Supplementary?

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Thank you to the minister. I'd like to describe this situation a little further.

Minister, this individual came to Canada with his family on a work visa and, as a result, the individual and his family wished to stay. He withdrew his original application and reapplied to the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program, but realized that he had applied to the incorrect job.

We have a federal government who ignore their responsibility for those crossing at illegal points of entry, but throw the book at you for checking off the wrong box on an application form.

1130

Will the minister stand up for skilled newcomers looking to make Ontario home and urge the federal government to take responsibility for their policies that have led to illegal border crossers?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I very much appreciate that question. Almost immediately after becoming the minister responsible for immigration, I did two things. One is to hold the federal Liberals to account on the escalating costs that we have seen as a province, which is \$200 million and growing. The second thing is, we have requested and we are going to hopefully receive more additional economic immigrants so we can work with the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade to ensure that there are more skilled workers coming into Canada as a result of that program.

But let me be perfectly clear: We have a broken border. Canadians, particularly Ontarians, are losing confidence in

the federal government's ability to manage the illegal border-crosser issue in the province of Quebec. That is having a very big impact on us in our province. I just want to be very clear. There are people right now who are on welfare rolls in Ontario who could be there for up to two years and then deported. We are calling on the federal government to fix the claims process with refugees.

I'm not the only one because I'm going to read what John McKay, a federal Liberal MP, says: "The only fair thing for everybody is to process them quickly and I think that's where the government's weakness is."

OPIOID ABUSE

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Minister of Health. On Friday, the minister received an open letter, signed by 18 health care leaders across Ontario, urging her to take immediate action and open more overdose prevention sites. One of the signatories is the Windsor Essex Community Health Centre. The letter states: "Since supervised consumption services and overdose prevention sites began opening in mid-2017, they've already saved 917 lives by reversing overdoses...." That's 917 families who didn't receive the worst news possible. That's 917 people who still have a chance to build a better life.

Will the minister listen to these experts? Will she open more life-saving sites?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the member, very much, for the question, because every loss of life is tragic, and we have lost too many lives in Ontario. So I do take this very seriously, as does everyone, I'm sure, in this House.

That is what I have been listening to for the last several months. I have been listening to the people who are the experts, the people who run the supervised consumption sites and overdose prevention sites, people with lived experience, neighbours, community centres and so on. I have been speaking to all of the people who want to have something to say on this issue.

I am in the process—you are no doubt aware—that we have applied to Health Canada in order to have the exemption extended for another six months while I finalize my recommendations to the Premier, which will be finalized very shortly.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnett): Supplementary.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Back to the minister: Windsor continues to struggle with rising poverty. One in four children now grow up in low-income households.

Our community has also been hit particularly hard by the opioid crisis, so much so that local harm reduction workers and advocates are planning to open an un-sanctioned overdose prevention site, because they just can't wait any longer for this Conservative government to step up to the plate while members of our community die needlessly. But opening this site means that they are risking criminal prosecution.

Is this government really comfortable with harm reduction workers and advocates being treated like criminals just because they're trying to save lives?

Hon. Christine Elliott: There is no doubt that this is a very serious issue, and one that we have been dealing with for several months. I know that everyone wants an answer right away, but the Premier has indicated that he wants to make a proper evidence-based decision, and I don't think anyone in this House would disagree with that. That is what I've been studying. That is what I'm going to be recommending to the Premier.

Saving lives is of course very important, but the other part of it is also very important: You want to be able to help people get into treatment and rehabilitation so they can help improve their lives. You have to do both; both are very important.

But that is part of the recommendations I am going to be making to the Premier, to discuss these situations. He will be making a final determination. We are working with his office right now, and there will be a decision and an announcement to be made in very short order.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. As we celebrate Ontario's 20th Agriculture Week, I'm reminded of farmers in my riding of Carleton, farmers like Graham Green and Janet Acres Smiley, and all they do to put food on Ontario's tables.

However, it's also been a tough week. The USMCA will result in significant market access being given to the US at the expense of Ontario's farmers. It's disappointing that our federal counterparts have created this uncertainty for our agriculture industry. Last week, our Premier and our Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade went to Washington, sending a strong message that Ontario's farmers remain top of mind.

Mr. Speaker, through you: What will the minister do to ensure the federal government will keep the concerns of Ontario's farmers top of mind?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much to the member for the question. Our farmers are the bedrock of our communities, and we are reminded of their contributions during Ontario's 20th Agriculture Week.

Indeed, it's been a rough start for the week for our supply-managed sector following the USMCA. However, the Premier and I have taken immediate action to do everything in our power to help our farmers. We have met with our supply-managed stakeholders to assure them that we are calling on the federal government to compensate our farmers for their losses. Federal Minister Freeland has mentioned that our farmers will be compensated fully, fairly and for the concessions that they've made, and we will hold them to account for that.

Protecting our farmers ensures that our food is protected, safe and of the best quality. Our government is committed to working with our farmers as we continue to review the USMCA.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you to the minister for that answer. I'm proud to be part of a government that

stands up for its farmers and appreciates their contributions to our communities. I look forward to working with our government to ensure we can assist Ontario's farmers to the best of our abilities and to urge the Trudeau Liberals to keep Ontario's farmers top of mind.

Back to the minister: Can the minister please tell us what else he is going to do to create an environment that is supportive and open for business for our farmers?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I thank the member for the supplementary question. I also wanted to thank all the caucus members who took time to visit and take pictures of our tractors on the south driveway yesterday in celebrating Ontario Agriculture Week.

As mentioned before, our government is committed to standing up for our farmers. As we continue to review the USMCA, we will work with our farmers and urge the federal government to compensate them accordingly.

Our natural gas expansion plan, if passed, will put more money into the pockets of farming families and businesses so they can continue to provide more of the best quality food. Our plan to scrap the cap-and-trade carbon tax will also do the same, if passed, to put more money back into the pockets of taxpayers. We're cutting red tape and regulations, as seen first through our changes to our wild-life damage compensation program, with more announcements to follow.

On June 8, our government was elected to make Ontario open for business again. We have taken immediate action to make life more affordable and efficient for our farming—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock.

Start the clock. Next question.

MISSING PERSONS

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Four years ago, Maureen Trask, a parent, came to me looking for help to find her missing son, Daniel. After countless petitions to this House and a motion calling for missing persons legislation, Ontario's first Missing Persons Act was passed this past spring. I want to thank Maureen for her advocacy. She turned her grief into action in this province.

But because it is part of the Safer Ontario Act, it's on hold. This government has put that act on a pause.

1140

Can the minister provide an update as to when the Missing Persons Act will come into effect in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you for the question and for giving me the opportunity also to give an update.

I'd like to begin by stating that, in fact, my staff has already been instructed to begin the work on developing the necessary regulations to bring the Missing Persons Act to life. The Missing Persons Act, once in force, will address a current barrier faced by police in Ontario when

investigating missing person occurrences by providing police with tools to use in circumstances where there's no evidence a crime has been committed. The Missing Persons Act will allow police to apply for judicial orders to access records, such as information about travel or telephone and other electronic communications, or to authorize entry into premises to search for a missing person.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's good to hear that the ministry is working on the regulations, but the act needs to be brought to this Legislature in order for those regulations to be put into action.

Maureen is one of the strongest advocates for the Missing Persons Act, and Ontario is one of the only provinces that does not have this legislation. Maureen was briefed by ministry staff on the legislation's development because it was her family's experience losing Daniel that drove the creation of this act in the province of Ontario. Yet, since the election, that communication has unfortunately broken down.

Speaker, after Maureen's tireless advocacy, the government owes it to her and to people across this province to provide an answer and to bring the legislation back into this House. What is the status of the Missing Persons Act coming back to the Ontario Legislature so that we can have this act in the province?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you once again for that question. I'd like to repeat that my ministry takes this matter very seriously. My staff has already been instructed to begin development of the necessary regulations to bring the Missing Persons Act to life. The Missing Persons Act will provide the men and women of our police services with the tools necessary to more effectively conduct investigations into matters regarding missing persons.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Ms. Jane McKenna: My question is for the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility. I learned yesterday that we honoured seniors from across the province on National Seniors Day. Can the minister share with this House why seniors, like myself, are important to this government?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the hard-working MPP from Burlington. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Monday's celebration and why acknowledging the contribution of seniors was important to me and worthy of our collective support.

Our seniors are the foundation of our society, this province and this great nation, Canada. Mr. Speaker, we owe a great deal to the women and men who helped build our province and our country. Right now, there are two million seniors in the province. In 25 years, that number will double to four million.

I want to be clear: We intend to support them every step of the way. Seniors are living healthier, independently, and are more socially engaged.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock.

Start the clock. Supplementary?

Ms. Jane McKenna: Back to the minister: Can the minister let this House know just how this government intends to support the seniors of Ontario?

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: Thank you for that excellent question. Premier Doug Ford and this government have the highest regard for Ontario's seniors. Treating them with respect is at the heart of everything we do as a government.

As the AMO conference last August, I met so many mayors and their councillors. They're working so hard to build age-friendly initiatives in their municipalities. I have also attended many events, such as the recent Ontario seniors' community association conference in Alliston. I also visited two excellent seniors' living centres in Ottawa.

We reach out to Ontario's seniors through so many excellent, hard-working stakeholders who share our passion and commitment.

WOMEN'S SHELTERS

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. Mission Services, which operates London's Rotholme Women's and Family Shelter, is in crisis. The shelter is operating at 195% capacity, with 20 families in the shelter and another 19 spending their nights in motels.

In July, we asked this government if they would open provincial and federally owned properties to deal with the unprecedented and alarming demand for housing. To the minister: While this government blames the federal government and points fingers, what is being actually done now to help shelters continue to serve our most vulnerable?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much for the question. I very much appreciate it, particularly since we will be celebrating and marking International Day of the Girl later on this afternoon.

I can tell you that violence against women is something of a very important priority for me, and I have been working within my ministry in order to figure out how we can build more shelter capacity. I will have more to say about that in the weeks to come.

I do appreciate your question. I'm interested in learning more about your specific issue, so we'll have that conversation after question period if that's okay with the member opposite.

But I want to be very clear: It's really difficult for the member opposite to equate what's happening with the illegal border crossers and asylum seekers that are filling up the shelter capacity in the city of Toronto and in the city of Ottawa when at the same time we're trying to build capacity for women's shelters across the province.

I remain committed, as the minister responsible for women but also the minister responsible for community and social services, to working with the member opposite. We're going to continue to invest more money into this area. I can say that in 2017-18 we invested \$160 million into this area.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: While I look forward to meeting with the minister, I'm concerned about the people who are not being served right now. Calling this a refugee crisis is calling it by a different name than what it actually is. There are people who are in crisis right now. There are people who are homeless, and that answer does nothing for people who are homeless right now.

Shelters like Rotholme need the government to step in immediately. We've seen social assistance increases and social housing repair funding slashed by this government, all while misusing the word "compassionate." We need something done now. We need the minister to step in today and deliver the relief that the people of London desperately need.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Again, I think the member opposite is confusing the situation that is happening in the city of Toronto and the city of Ottawa with what is happening in London.

I can tell you that the capacity we have in our shelter systems has been impacted significantly. I would like the member opposite to join us in asking the federal government to come to the table with \$200 million so that the people who are most vulnerable in my ministry, who are women escaping violence, women who are being trafficked, children at risk, children in care and children in the justice system, and those who are developmentally disabled—they deserve the funding. I have no idea why the members opposite won't join Ontario's calls. Every single Premier in Canada has joined with this ministry.

So I'll meet with the member opposite after question period—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

That concludes the time for question period today.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Someone sent me a message indicating they wanted a point of order, but didn't sign it. Someone wanted to correct their record. Is there a point of order? The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: On a point of order: I'd like to correct my record. My memory was on my first election rather than on my most recent election. It should be the 7th of June rather than the 8th.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members can correct their own records.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a deferred vote on the amendment to government notice of motion number 9 relating to allocation of time on Bill 4, An Act respecting the preparation of a climate change plan,

providing for the wind down of the cap and trade program and repealing the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act, 2016.

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

The division bells rang from 1150 to 1155.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would ask that members please take their seats.

On October 2, Monsieur Bisson moved an amendment to government notice of motion number 9, relating to the allocation of time on Bill 4. All those in favour of Monsieur Bisson's motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hassan, Faisal	Sattler, Peggy
Bell, Jessica	Hatfield, Percy	Schreiner, Mike
Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Shaw, Sandy
Bourgoquin, Guy	Karpoche, Bhutila	Singh, Gurratan
Burch, Jeff	Kernaghan, Terence	Singh, Sara
Fife, Catherine	Lalonde, Marie-France	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Fraser, John	Lindo, Laura Mae	Stiles, Marit
French, Jennifer K.	Mamakwa, Sol	Tabuns, Peter
Gates, Wayne	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
Gélinas, France	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	Vanthof, John
Glover, Chris	Morrison, Suze	West, Jamie
Gretzky, Lisa	Natyshak, Taras	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Harden, Joel	Rakocevic, Tom	Yarde, Kevin

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to Monsieur Bisson's motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Anand, Deepak	Jones, Sylvia	Rickford, Greg
Baber, Roman	Kanapathi, Logan	Roberts, Jeremy
Babikian, Aris	Karahalios, Belinda	Romano, Ross
Bailey, Robert	Ke, Vincent	Sabawy, Sheref
Barrett, Toby	Khanjin, Andrea	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Kramp, Daryl	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bouma, Will	Kusendova, Natalia	Scott, Laurie
Calandra, Paul	Lecce, Stephen	Simard, Amanda
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	MacLeod, Lisa	Skelly, Donna
Clark, Steve	Martin, Robin	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	Martow, Gila	Smith, Todd
Crawford, Stephen	McDonell, Jim	Surma, Kinga
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McKenna, Jane	Tangri, Nina
Downey, Doug	McNaughton, Monte	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Dunlop, Jill	Mitas, Christina Maria	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	Mulroney, Caroline	Tibollo, Michael A.
Fee, Amy	Nicholls, Rick	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fullerton, Merrilee	Oosterhoff, Sam	Wai, Daisy
Ghamari, Goldie	Pang, Billy	Walker, Bill
Gill, Parm	Park, Lindsey	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Pettapiece, Randy	Yakabuski, John
Harris, Mike	Phillips, Rod	Yurek, Jeff
Hillier, Randy	Piccini, David	
Hogarth, Christine	Rasheed, Kaleed	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 39; the nays are 70.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion lost.

I am now required to put the question on the main motion.

Mr. Bethlenfalvy has moved government notice of motion number 9, relating to allocation of time on Bill 4, An Act respecting the preparation of a climate change plan, providing for the wind down of the cap and trade program and repealing the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act, 2016. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Same vote, reversed.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Same vote, reversed?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): No.

The division bells rang from 1200 to 1201.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Bethlenfalvy has moved government notice of motion number 9 relating to allocation of time on Bill 4.

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

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Jones, Sylvia	Rickford, Greg
Baber, Roman	Kanapathi, Logan	Roberts, Jeremy
Babikian, Aris	Karahalios, Belinda	Romano, Ross
Bailey, Robert	Ke, Vincent	Sabawy, Sheref
Barrett, Toby	Khanjin, Andrea	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Kramp, Daryl	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bouma, Will	Kusendova, Natalia	Scott, Laurie
Calandra, Paul	Lecce, Stephen	Simard, Amanda
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	MacLeod, Lisa	Skelly, Donna
Clark, Steve	Martin, Robin	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	Martow, Gila	Smith, Todd
Crawford, Stephen	McDonnell, Jim	Surma, Kinga
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McKenna, Jane	Tangri, Nina
Downey, Doug	McNaughton, Monte	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Dunlop, Jill	Mitas, Christina Maria	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	Mulrone, Caroline	Tibollo, Michael A.
Fee, Amy	Nicholls, Rick	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fullerton, Merrilee	Oosterhoff, Sam	Wai, Daisy
Ghamari, Goldie	Pang, Billy	Walker, Bill
Gill, Parm	Park, Lindsey	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Pettapiece, Randy	Yakabuski, John
Harris, Mike	Phillips, Rod	Yurek, Jeff
Hillier, Randy	Piccini, David	
Hogarth, Christine	Rasheed, Kaleed	

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be counted by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hassan, Faisal	Sattler, Peggy
Bell, Jessica	Hatfield, Percy	Schreiner, Mike
Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Shaw, Sandy
Bourgouin, Guy	Karpoche, Bhutilla	Singh, Gurratan
Burch, Jeff	Kernaghan, Terence	Singh, Sara
Fife, Catherine	Lalonde, Marie-France	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Fraser, John	Lindo, Laura Mae	Stiles, Marit
French, Jennifer K.	Mamakwa, Sol	Tabuns, Peter

Gates, Wayne
Gélinas, France
Glover, Chris
Gretzky, Lisa
Harden, Joel

Mantha, Michael
Monteith-Farrell, Judith
Morrison, Suze
Natyshak, Taras
Rakocevic, Tom

Taylor, Monique
Vanhof, John
West, Jamie
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Yarde, Kevin

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 70; the nays are 39.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next we have a deferred vote on government notice of motion number 10 relating to allocation of time on Bill 36, An Act to enact a new Act and make amendments to various other Acts respecting the use and sale of cannabis and vapour products in Ontario.

Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

Mr. Bill Walker: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Same vote? Same vote.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 70; the nays are 39.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The motion is carried.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: He almost escaped, but I've always got my eye on him. Today is the birthday of the member from Toronto–Danforth.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Happy birthday to you.

This House stands in recess until 3 p.m. this afternoon.
The House recessed from 1205 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LONDON-MIDDLESEX SUICIDE PREVENTION COUNCIL

Ms. Peggy Sattler: In recognition of Mental Illness Awareness Week, I'm pleased to rise as MPP for London West to highlight the important work of the London-Middlesex Suicide Prevention Council. The focus of this week is to raise awareness and reduce stigma around mental health through the sharing of personal stories, which is exactly what the London-Middlesex Suicide Prevention Council seeks to do with its Lifting the Silence Memorial Walk and ceremony, held this year on September 10.

This annual event, now in its 13th year, is organized by volunteers to remember those lost to suicide and to support

the family and friends they left behind. Individuals who have lost a loved one or experienced the stigma associated with suicide share stories, poetry and song and are invited to honour their loved one by name. This year, the names of more than 75 individuals were remembered, including Jenepher Watt, who died by suicide in 2015 at the age of 20 and whose story of being forced to sleep on the floor of the ER was raised by me in this Legislature.

Speaker, mental health services in London are struggling to serve more individuals and more families, with fewer resources. The gaps in services can be particularly devastating for children and youth. Events such as Lifting the Silence reinforce the desperate need for more services in my community and the harm that this government's \$330-million cut to mental health funding will cause.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Toronto Centre on a point of order.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome a few guests who have joined us here in the members' gallery today. I'd like to welcome Eleanor McGrath and Wendy Pitblado, who are two activists who have been instrumental in achieving a plaque commemorating the home children in Toronto—for all the tremendous work that they have done. I'd also like to welcome Camille Bégin from the Toronto heritage foundation, who was also instrumental in that plaque, which I'll be speaking to in my member's statement.

REENA FOUNDATION

Mrs. Gila Martow: I just want to let everybody know that for over 40 years, Reena has served individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities, and the Reena Foundation is hosting its third Exceptional Abilities Gala on November 21 at the Fontana Primavera in Vaughan, and Premier Doug Ford is the scheduled honouree. The gala celebrates the exceptional abilities of the individuals in the developmental services sector. Reena and the 2018 chairs, David Bodenstein, Madeleine Bodenstein and Jeffrey Shankman, are grateful to Premier Ford for stepping up as the honouree.

Proceeds will be directed to support vital programs and to launch the capital campaign for a new building in Thornhill. The building will be modelled after the Reena Community Residence, which opened in 2009 and has become a model for the sector. The new building will provide affordable housing for this sector, which has a current wait-list of over 6,000 people. President and CEO Bryan Keshen has formed a consortium of agencies across Ontario who wish to build similar buildings, and Reena is at the forefront of lending its expertise to other agencies.

I'm pleased to lend my support to Sheila Miller Lampert, the executive director of advising for the gala—we went to Western Laval High School together. Sheila also co-chaired the same gala two years ago with Doug Ford, and Chief Mark Saunders was the honoree. I attended with my husband; it

was a fantastic evening. I'm sure that this year will be fantastic as well.

I want to thank the sponsors, the donors, the participants, the organizers and the chairs, and I especially want to thank the special guest of honour for the event, our very own Premier Doug Ford.

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Ms. Suze Morrison: I rise today to acknowledge a painful memory in our shared history here in Ontario. Our province has a deep and sometimes heartbreaking story; and it's important that we tell all of our stories, not just the ones that are easy to hear.

Last week I had the honour of attending a plaque unveiling at Metro Hall commemorating children from Great Britain and Ireland who were sent to Canada from 1869 well through the 1940s as labourers and indentured servants. These children were often mistreated and abused. They have become known as the "home children," and it's their story that I rise to tell today.

These orphaned and impoverished children came to Canada at very young ages and were often separated from their siblings. When they arrived, they were sent to receiving homes where they waited to be placed in households that would provide them with housing in exchange for their labour. One of those receiving houses was located on Jarvis Street, in my riding of Toronto Centre.

It's estimated that approximately 10% of all Canadians are descendants of the home children. It was an honour to stand with the descendants of the home children, with Heritage Toronto and with community activists who fought to share this story with all of us.

I look forward to seeing this plaque installed in its rightful place on Jarvis Street, at the original site of where the receiving house was located.

Speaker, as I wrap up, I'd like to call on all the members of this House to learn from our history and to beg of us to learn from our mistakes. We've seen the generational harm that it causes to remove children from their families, and this is a trauma that we still see continue today through our CAS system.

Lastly, I've been given a pin to commemorate the home children, and I would like to request unanimous consent of this House to wear it today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Toronto Centre is seeking unanimous consent to wear a pin to recognize the home children. Agreed? Agreed.

ONTARIO TRIAL LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

Mr. Ross Romano: I'd like to take a moment to recognize and speak a little about one of the groups that has joined us here today at Queen's Park, and that is the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association. As I'm sure many of you may be aware, prior to my time as an MPP, I was actually a lawyer back at home in my city of Sault Ste. Marie, practising in both criminal and civil litigation. I started off

as an in-house duty counsel at the courthouse, moved on to be an assistant crown attorney, then went into defence practice and, as a lawyer, have just about sat on every side of the law that we have. Throughout that time, I developed and continue to foster such a tremendous amount of respect for all those people who work within the legal profession and those who contribute so much to helping support the rule of law and access to justice in the province.

The Ontario Trial Lawyers Association is such a group. Formed in 1991, this association has done incredible work both within Ontario and across the rest of Canada and the United States. Not only are they champions in advocating against injustices within our society, but they work to uphold the standards and professionalism that all lawyers, past and present, myself included, should strive to achieve.

From one lawyer to another, and on behalf of the Attorney General of the province of Ontario, I want to once again welcome Ron Bohm, Allen Wynperle, Laura Hillyer, John Karapita and all the other members from the association who may have been missed today at Queen's Park. The work that you do is so invaluable, and I wish you continued success in the future.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This week Premier Ford has decided to ramp up his attack on working Ontarians. He said, with great animosity, that he was getting rid of Bill 148. Speaker, more people are working since the minimum wage went up, not less. There is no evidence to support the Premier's position.

His fear-mongering does not help people; it only helps their bosses take money out of the workers' pockets. In Alberta, the minimum wage rose to \$15 an hour this week. In Seattle, where the minimum wage is \$15.45, they have recorded a historic low unemployment rate. Even big businesses, like Amazon, have finally admitted that they can afford to pay workers \$15 an hour.

Meanwhile, here in Ontario we are moving backwards. We are going downhill and we are going fast. The Ford government, which hands out public money to corporations, the big business buddies of the Premier, claim that the benefits will trickle down. Everyone knows that the way to boost the economy is from the bottom up. Minimum wage workers don't typically get to jet ski in Muskoka; 100% of their wages go back into the economy.

This government repeatedly says that the best program to lift a person out of poverty is a job, and yet they want to keep millions of Ontarians—those who have a job, those who are working—in poverty. No one should be working full-time, let alone two or three or four jobs, and still live in poverty. No one should force themselves to work when they are sick. No one should lose their job because they have an emergency. No one deserves to have their paid vacation days cut.

Speaker, Ontarians deserve so much better. They deserve respect and they deserve dignity from this government.

1510

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm honoured to rise today during mental health awareness week to thank one of the strongest advocates for action on mental health issues I've ever met. Earlier today, I attended a press conference hosted by the member from Nickel Belt where one of my constituents, Noah Irvine, aged 19, challenged every member in this House to put partisanship aside and to address the lack of action on mental health and addictions issues.

My constituency of Guelph has seen a 50% increase in the number of emergency room admissions for mental health and addictions issues. Across Ontario, we've seen a 54% increase in emergency department visits for children and youth seeking mental health services. Right now, over 12,000 children in Ontario are on a wait-list for mental health services.

Noah challenged everyone in this House to support the recommendations of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. Eight years after that committee's recommendations, Mr. Speaker, it is time for us to act. Noah's campaign reminds us that it's urgent to build a comprehensive and fully funded mental health strategy for Ontario.

I want to sincerely thank Noah Irvine for his advocacy on behalf of everyone struggling with mental health and addictions issues.

ONTARIO AGRICULTURE WEEK

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I rise in this place today to reflect on and celebrate our farmer families and the entire agricultural sector in Ontario.

This week marks the 20th anniversary of Ontario Agriculture Week. Twenty years ago MPPs stood in this place and debated a private member's bill tabled by the member for Perth, Mr. Bert Johnson, who is in the gallery here today.

Bert's goal was to set aside a specific time each year for all citizens of Ontario to celebrate the hard work of Ontario farmers, farm families and agricultural workers. It begins each year on the Monday immediately before Thanksgiving. At Thanksgiving, the harvest is nearing completion, and we can see the full bounty of what Ontario has to offer the world.

During this time of year, agricultural producers across Ontario are working long hours to ensure the province and world has enough food to last the winter. Ontario's agri-food industry is extremely diverse. It includes a great number of people who would not define themselves as farmers.

Agriculture Week recognizes not just farm families but the diverse businesses and food processors in our province. It celebrates their many contributions to Ontario as they deserve special recognition for providing all Ontarians with healthy, nutritious food. Twenty years ago, the agricultural industry in Ontario represented \$25 billion in

GDP annually. Today, Mr. Speaker, it brings in over \$40 billion.

Please join me in thanking Bert for his leadership and commitment to agriculture in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, we welcome Bert Johnson to the Ontario Legislature this afternoon as well. It's great to have you here.

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Today in my riding, the injured workers group is hosting a workshop on dealing with WSIB and the trauma that many people who have been broken by their work suffer. I worked for 25 years representing people with WSIB claims and systems. I have witnessed the various changes that WSIB has manifested itself with the costly consequences of prime real estate acquisitions, name changes and programs that never seem to work sufficiently to meet the mandate and help injured workers.

From 2010 to 2015, there has been a 25% reduction in compensation for lost wages, a 10% reduction in health care costs paid, and a 66% reduction in payment for permanent impairment, leaving thousands in poverty. This government celebrated with a 30% reduction in premiums to employers when the WSIB retired their unsecured debt. I know that employers, especially small businesses, have suffered too, but we must examine the cost to us all when benefits continue to be denied.

When the WSIB fails to live up to its responsibilities—a system supported by employer premiums and WSIB investments—the burden falls on Ontario taxpayers.

I encourage members of this House to read the publication *Workers' Comp is a Right* by the Ontario injured workers' association.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Recently, I was pleased to be able to tour one of the gems of Ontario's health care system, the Carpenter Hospice in Burlington. Carpenter is a palliative care centre with trained staff, under the leadership of executive director Karen Candy, and more than 200 volunteers providing care and comfort to its residents and therapeutic outreach programs to the wider community. Their residential care is designed to enhance the individual's quality of life, attending to emotional, social and spiritual needs, as well as physical health care.

I want to thank Rick Firth, president and CEO of Hospice Palliative Care Ontario, for conducting the tour. Mr. Firth and his organization represent the hospice sector, which now has 342 beds in 40 residential hospices across Ontario similar to Carpenter, caring for over 6,000 people each year.

The Auditor General, in 2014, reported that these hospices save the health care system \$24 million annually over the cost of hospital care.

I want to thank Carpenter Hospice and all of the staff, volunteers and families in the hospice network for the high-quality work they do.

HENRY MARACLE

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: I would like to recognize the start of the 2018-19 National Hockey League season by honouring the first Indigenous player to play in the NHL, Henry "Buddy" Maracle.

Buddy Maracle was born on September 8, 1904, in Ayr, Ontario. He played in 11 regular season games and four playoff games with the New York Rangers. Maracle made his NHL debut on February 12, 1931, in Detroit versus the Detroit Falcons, now known as the Detroit Red Wings. He scored his first goal and added an assist and two penalties against the Philadelphia Quakers in the historic Madison Square Garden on February 22, 1931.

I was honoured to take part in the ceremonial unveiling of his jersey in my riding last week. The event was well attended, with dignitaries such as the mayor of North Dumfries, Susan Foxton; Chief Ava Hill, Mohawk, Wolf Clan, chief of the 56th elected council of the Six Nations of the Grand River; as well as Nancy and Christine, who are relatives of Buddy.

I'd also like to thank Irene Schmidt-Adeney of Ayr News. Irene's research over the last few years has brought attention to Buddy's place in hockey history as well as in Canadian history. Their next goal is to have Buddy officially recognized by the Hockey Hall of Fame as the NHL's first-ever Indigenous player.

Finally, I'd like to thank everyone who helped organize this successful event.

Buddy Maracle will undoubtedly be an inspiration to future hockey hopefuls from Ayr.

Mr. Speaker, with two-time Stanley Cup winner Kyle Clifford and Henry "Buddy" Maracle both hailing from Ayr, it's very clear that Ayr is a good ol' hockey town.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TAX FAIRNESS FOR REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONALS ACT, 2018 LOI DE 2018 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ FISCALE POUR LES PROFESSIONNELS DE L'IMMOBILIER

Mr. Bailey moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 38, An Act to amend the Business Corporations Act and the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002 with respect to personal real estate corporations / Projet de loi 38, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les sociétés par actions et la Loi de 2002 sur le courtage commercial et immobilier relativement aux sociétés personnelles immobilières.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Sarnia–Lambton like to explain his bill?

1520

Mr. Robert Bailey: This bill amends the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002, to permit a personal real estate corporation to be registered as a broker or salesperson. A personal real estate corporation must be incorporated as a professional corporation under the Business Corporations Act and be authorized only to trade in real estate.

In addition, the bill would amend the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002, to permit a brokerage to pay a commission or other remuneration to a person or real estate corporation that employs a broker or a salesperson.

ACCESSIBLE PARKING AND TOWING
INDUSTRY REVIEW COMMITTEE
ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR LE COMITÉ D'EXAMEN
DU STATIONNEMENT ACCESSIBLE
ET DU SECTEUR DE REMORQUAGE

Mrs. Martow moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 39, An Act to require the establishment of an Accessible Parking and Towing Industry Review Committee / Projet de loi 39, Loi exigeant la constitution d'un comité d'examen du stationnement accessible et du secteur de remorquage.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Thornhill care to explain her bill?

Mrs. Gila Martow: The Accessible Parking and Towing Industry Review Committee Act, 2018, requires the Minister of Government and Consumer Services to establish an advisory committee to do the following:

(1) Inquire into and report on the system of accessible parking for persons with a disability;

(2) Inquire into and report on matters related to the towing industry.

HUMAN RIGHTS CODE
AMENDMENT ACT (GENETIC
CHARACTERISTICS), 2018
LOI DE 2018 MODIFIANT LE CODE
DES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE
(CARACTÉRISTIQUES GÉNÉTIQUES)

Miss Mitas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 40, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code with respect to genetic characteristics / Projet de loi 40, Loi modifiant le Code des droits de la personne en ce qui a trait aux caractéristiques génétiques.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Scarborough Centre like to explain her bill?

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: This bill amends the Human Rights Code to include genetic characteristics as a prohibited ground of discrimination. The act currently includes race, marital status and disability, among other things, as prohibited grounds.

In addition to other amendments, various sections are amended to provide that every person has a right to equal treatment without discrimination because of genetic characteristics with respect to services, goods and facilities, the occupancy of accommodation, the right to contract and employment, and membership in various types of organizations. This includes the right to equal treatment if a person refuses to undergo or disclose the results of a genetic test.

Insurance contracts are permitted to differentiate or make a distinction, exclusion or preference on reasonable and bona fide grounds because of genetic characteristics.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT
(HELMET EXEMPTION
FOR SIKH MOTORCYCLISTS), 2018
LOI DE 2018 MODIFIANT
LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (EXEMPTION
DE L'OBLIGATION DE PORT DU CASQUE
POUR LES MOTOCYCLISTES SIKHS)

Mr. Sarkaria moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 41, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to exempt Sikh motorcyclists from the requirement to wear a helmet / Projet de loi 41, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour exempter les motocyclistes sikhs de l'obligation de porter un casque.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Brampton South may explain this bill.

Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: This bill, if passed, would exempt members of the Sikh faith who habitually wear a turban and have unshorn hair and would allow them to ride motorcycles without a helmet. This would also bring Ontario's helmet laws in line with those of British Columbia, Alberta and Manitoba, and countries like the United Kingdom. I look forward to working with the members in this House in the coming weeks.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

ONTARIO AGRICULTURE WEEK

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to mark the 20th Ontario Agriculture Week. It's a time just before Thanksgiving each year when we give thanks to the people who, through their passion and

hard work, bring Ontarians the good things we eat and the products we use every day.

It's a challenging time right now for Ontario's farmers, now that we have seen the concessions in the new trade agreement that will hurt our supply-managed sector. If farmers are abandoned because of the concessions from the federal government, it is up to the federal government to take immediate action to support the families and the livelihoods that are now at risk.

Ottawa says, and I'm quoting Minister Freeland, "To mitigate the impact of these changes, the government has promised its producers they will be compensated fully and fairly for all losses." We'll be watching and we'll hold them to account, because we will always stand up for Ontario's farmers.

Ontario Agriculture Week was created by my former colleague Bert Johnson's—he was in the gallery here—private member's bill in 1998. This week marks the annual opportunity to celebrate Ontario agriculture and to recognize the contributions of our farmers. These people are caretakers of the land and of our animals. They nurture the soil that grows fresh, healthy food to feed people the best quality products across the province and around the world and ensure that our animals receive the best quality of care.

Our agri-food sector is often spoken of as the backbone of the economy, contributing \$39.5 billion to the province's GDP and supporting more than 822,000 jobs. That's almost one in eight jobs in this province.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario is open for business, and that includes our agriculture industry. Our government is committed to supporting the people—farmers, processors, suppliers and distributors—who make up the entire agriculture value chain. Expanding value-added processing in Ontario is of particular importance to me to create jobs and help grow our economy and our rural communities.

Since becoming the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, I have been listening to the concerns of our farmers on how we can make changes that are more effective for them. From our livestock producers to our horticulture, grain and oilseed farmers, to those in the processing sector, people are excited to work with our new government to bring the changes that are long overdue.

One of the changes our government made was to the Ontario Wildlife Damage Compensation Program. We updated the program on September 4 so that those with valid registration numbers from the current or previous year may apply for compensation to the program, in addition to providing separate pricing for steers and heifers. We are consulting on further changes to reduce the regulatory burden.

Our government has also gotten to work right away on the issues most important to the people of Ontario. We are finding ways to scrap regulatory burdens and red tape in areas where it makes life more difficult and unaffordable for our farmers. We have put forward legislation that, if passed, would repeal the Green Energy Act and scrap the cap-and-trade carbon tax. We also introduced legislation which, if passed, would allow us to work with the private

sector to expand access to natural gas and put more money back in their pockets.

1530

I had the opportunity to participate in a number of agriculture round tables, most recently at the International Plowing Match with Premier Ford. At that round table, we heard a lot of concerns about both red tape and the impact of trade uncertainty. I want to commend Premier Ford for travelling to Washington the next day, where he stood up for Ontario jobs and brought forward the trade concerns of our farmers.

I've also had the opportunity to attend some of our world-class events, such as the Hastings plowing match, Canada's Outdoor Farm Show—incidentally, it's also in the centre of the world, in my riding—and the International Plowing Match. Each and every one of these is an opportunity to see first-hand the hard work and skill that goes into making our agriculture industry as strong and diverse as it is.

Those in agriculture work for a cause, not for applause. As we mark Agriculture Week, let us celebrate the people of Ontario who dedicate their lives to agriculture and food. Here in Ontario, we have a proud agri-food industry, comprised of people we trust to bring a safe, delicious and local harvest every year. As we celebrate the 20th Ontario Agriculture Week, please take the time to reach out and thank a farmer.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I'm proud to rise today in this House in celebration of International Day of the Girl.

As minister of children and the minister of women's issues, October 11 will be an important day to reflect on the progress made for women and girls throughout our history, but as importantly, to set our minds forward as we continue to advance the interests of women and girls in Ontario and elsewhere in the world where it is in shorter supply.

As a mother and as a female politician, I've always tried to instill in my daughter and the young girls in my community that the values we share in Canada should not and cannot be taken for granted. In Nepean, I created a day of Girls in Government and Leadership and I've been fortunate to take that into a few schools for a day. Similar to Equal Voice's Girls' Government, the idea is to teach female students about their rights, current affairs and careers that are non-traditional for women and girls. The goal is to inspire and empower the girls so that they know they can do anything they set their minds to.

It's important to me and to our government that girls in Ontario know it's only been 100 years that most women were able to secure the right to vote. Yet, in some countries around the world, in less developed nations that are less-than-democratic, the rights of women are a distant dream. Girls in Ontario should not be complacent about their right to and access to quality education.

One must only turn their attention to Malala Yousafzai, who risked her life and was nearly killed for going to

school because she lived in Pakistan, in a village where the Taliban had banned girls from getting and receiving an education. When my husband, Joe, went to Afghanistan on two occasions, one of my favourite photos that he would send back to me was of young girls, book bags strapped to their shoulders, eyes beaming and ready to go to school. I might add that's thanks to the sacrifices of many Canadian soldiers.

In the midst of armed conflict, there was relief for these children who were once again able to travel safely to school. That's not a reality for everyone. In fact, for some girls, schools aren't even available in their village, or in the next town, or at all. When explaining why she and her eight siblings did not go to school in Afghanistan, 15-year-old Najiba said the closest school was so far, "by the time we walked" there, "the school day would end."

In another town, the stories were worse. Chehrah, 16, lived only 100 metres from a school in Kandahar. She was harassed so much that she asked her dad to go to another school so she could be safe. She says: "Men would disturb and threaten small girls." They "would touch us and do other actions with us, so we left the school. They were local men living nearby. No one tried to stop them ... Kandahar people won't allow their girls to go to school." So her father removed her from school permanently at age 12.

That's why, as Canadian legislators, we must always be vigilant in our protection of women and girls, and help bring more educational opportunities to parts of the world where those opportunities do not exist. We have more work to do, and as minister of women and children, I'm committed to doing it. An important first step for all of us is to recognize the International Day of the Girl in this assembly.

To me, what's really special about this day is not just the steps taken to foster equality or the goals set to even the playing field, but the unbridled optimism and unparalleled mentorship that young girls across the world, and right here in Ontario, can and should bear witness to—women supporting girls, women focused on righting historic wrongs, and women in places they haven't traditionally been.

Consider this: According to a recent study, only 40% of women say they want a leadership role, compared to 56% of men. This statistic remains true whether they were mothers or not. Combine that with the fact that the same study shows that women are less likely to be promoted than men and are more likely to be called "bossy" when negotiating raises. I've been called my fair share of "bossy" over the years, Speaker. Not to take away from that, but this has become a cultural issue. It's one where we can naturally be leaders, as legislators and community leaders, in helping to shift that change.

Inequality fluctuates at different levels in different countries. It fluctuates within our own province in different communities, and the lack of opportunities for women and girls manifests itself in different ways. But the culture of women as less than equal has been all too real for far too long. The best way we can combat that is to build up young girls and let them see the opportunities that they are

capable of attaining. So when people ask about why the International Day of the Girl is so important, it's because changing attitudes is important, because teaching the next generation of female leaders the complacency that we were taught does irreparable harm, and because curtailing ambition never has been, nor ever will be, in any girl's best interest.

That brings me to Sherry Holmes, with whom I had a good meeting today and who knows full well how to buck a trend. With a skilled trades shortage in Ontario, it's shocking that only 4.5% of the Canadian trades workforce is comprised of women. Sherry has thrived in a male-dominated workforce for the better part of a decade, with plans to inspire as many young girls as she possibly can. In a recent interview with *City Life*, she shared her personal experience. She described attending home shows where women approached her asking for advice and showing off their trades certificates and their achievements. She said, "Women see me involved in the trades and realize that they can do it too. One woman can create an army of women."

To that end, I'm so proud of Canada's role in this day's creation. Former federal Conservative Party leader Rona Ambrose championed this cause in late 2009, charting a course all the way to the United Nations, where she inspired some countries and pleaded with others to take action. It wasn't an easy sell. It was difficult to see a path to celebrating girls in countries where girls and women have no rights, where education is an afterthought, where abuse is common, and where human trafficking goes unchecked. That is the essence of why we need International Day of the Girl: to understand that what has been the norm, what has been convention for the past five, 50, and even 100 years, must be examined, it must be challenged and it must be corrected. We must end the practice of having our daughters sacrifice their childhood, their education and even their futures, because, make no mistake, better-educated girls become even more successful women.

On October 11, I encourage everyone in this Legislature to ask themselves how they can assist the girls in their life, supporting and mentoring them as they mature into leaders of tomorrow. By supporting girls with better education, healthy environments and more opportunities, we will be a stronger Ontario and we will have a positive influence throughout the globe when it comes to empowering women and young girls.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Responses to ministerial statements?

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL

Ms. Suze Morrison: Today I would like to say thank you, as I start, to all of the young women in this House, particularly the pages. Your work does not go unnoticed on this side of the aisle and I'd like to thank you for all that you do.

1540

Last week, I actually had the opportunity to sit down with one of our pages, a young woman from my riding.

Her name is Isha and I believe that she's in the House with us today as she finishes up the last of her rotation with us. Isha lives in my community. She attends Winchester Junior and Senior Public School and, during our lunchtime together, Isha let me know that when she grows up, she wants to go into the STEM field and become a neurologist, which I think is so exciting. She's a very smart girl. I'm so proud to have such a smart, capable and dedicated young woman as one of my constituents and to think of and speak of as I get to stand here today to highlight the International Day of the Girl.

I want to talk about young women all across Ontario like Isha who are making a difference every day in our province. As one example, on September 21, students in our province organized mass walkouts to protest what this government is doing to their curriculum. Branded under the hashtag #WeTheStudentsDoNotConsent, hundreds of students walked out all over the province to stand up for their education and to stand up for their rights.

Many of the lead organizers at schools across Ontario were young girls—young girls who have had enough. That day, as I was leaving Queen's Park in the afternoon, I ran into a group of these young women, mostly teenagers, who had taken the subway from their school to come to the south lawn of Queen's Park and demonstrate their displeasure with the way that things are going in our province. The women were chanting, screaming and protesting, and I felt so proud to know that the leaders of tomorrow are ready and they are fired up. I have to say that my personal favourite chant that I heard them screaming was: "1998 called and it wants its sex ed back."

As women's issues critic, I believe something very sternly: We cannot fail the next generation of women and continue perpetuating harmful societal norms. We have to tear down patriarchy and enable our young women to participate fully in society. I know that my caucus colleagues join me in our vision for a modern sex ed curriculum that includes concepts like consent and gender identity. A curriculum that teaches about consent is paramount for young women as they grow into a society that tries to police their bodies and repress their sexuality.

We also support teaching our young people about this province's Indigenous history. I'd like to correct my colleague when she said that women have only had the right to vote in this country for 100 years; in fact, Indigenous women have only had the right to vote in this country since 1960. So, in fact, not all of us have had that right for as long as white women.

We also support pay equity so that young women can enter the workforce in the coming years and be paid the same as their male counterparts.

Young women are the future. They have agency, they have power, and I'm so proud of the work they are doing across Ontario.

ONTARIO AGRICULTURE WEEK

Mr. John Vanthof: On behalf of Andrea Horwath, our leader, and my NDP colleagues, I would like to help celebrate the 20th anniversary of Agriculture Week in Ontario.

Last week, I had the honour of attending the Temiskaming Plowing Match. In one field, they had a team of Percherons pulling a plow, a Massey-Harris 33 pulling another plow, a Kubota with a rollover plow and a big John Deere with a disk ripper.

Agriculture has come a long way, but the one thing that hasn't changed is that when it rains, everything stops. Farmers still have to fight the rain. They fight the elements, and then, when they grow a crop, they fight trade. Right now, a pork producer—because of a trade dispute between the Americans and the Chinese, hogs are below the cost of production, due to no fault of their own. It's the same with dairy: We've developed a system over the last 50 years that works for farmers and works for consumers, and it's threatened.

You have to ask yourself why they do it. Why do farmers do what they do? I'll tell you, Speaker. When you're in a field combining a crop that you've tended and the sun is out and you're running the machine and the bin is about to overflow and the wagon comes right on time driving beside you and you can dump and you don't have to stop, it's a feeling like you have never felt before. When you spend a night pulling, trying to help a cow have a calf and, finally, the calf's out and the eyes of the calf look a little bit glassy and you think it's almost dead, the first thing you do is take a piece of straw and tickle its nose and, nine times of 10, that will bring that calf back.

But why we really fight for agriculture in the NDP is for my neighbours, Chris and Anna Regele, who are a young couple who just bought their family farm. We will continue to fight for the family farm. We understand the family farm, and we will fight and continue to fight for as long as we have to.

PETITIONS

CURRICULUM

Ms. Suze Morrison: I have a petition today entitled "Protecting Children: Forward, Not Backward, on Sex Ed." It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"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 ... 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 their own child being a victim of cyberbullying; and

“Whereas” the Premier “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, cyberbullying 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. I will be affixing my signature to it and delivering it to page Alexander to provide to the table.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further petitions? The member from Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Michael Mantha: It’s about cormorants, right?

Mr. Robert Bailey: No, no cormorants.

This petition supports Sarnia’s permanent residential withdrawal facility.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, like many Ontario communities, the toll that drugs and alcohol have taken on Sarnia–Lambton is tremendous, but we have hope and importantly, we have a plan;

“Whereas a proposal for a permanent withdrawal management facility has been developed with input from many organizations in our community using the most current research available on withdrawal management;

“Whereas our plan is a vision of teamwork: a one-stop hub for addictions services, improving access to services and bringing care partners together for a team approach to caring for our community;

“Whereas a permanent facility would provide day, community and residential withdrawal management services, stabilization services and wraparound services for people who are battling their addictions;

“Whereas there is currently a temporary location providing some of these much-needed services but together we can provide better care and improve access to treatment for clients;

“Whereas our need is urgent, our plan is in place;

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

“That members of the Legislature please help us save lives and support our community members by supporting permanent withdrawal management services in Sarnia–Lambton.”

I agree with this petition. I’ll affix my signature and send it down with Simon D.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Jessica Bell: This petition is to the Ontario Legislative Assembly: “Don’t Take Away Our \$15 Minimum Wage and Fairer Labour Laws.

“Whereas the vast majority of Ontarians support a \$15 minimum wage and better laws to protect workers; and

“Whereas last year, in response to overwhelming popular demand by the people of Ontario, the provincial government brought in legislation and regulations that:

“Deliver 10 personal emergency leave days for all workers, the first two of which are paid;

“Make it illegal to pay part-time, temporary, casual or contract workers less than their full-time or directly hired co-workers, including equal public holiday pay and vacation pay;

“Raised the adult general minimum wage to \$14 per hour and further raises it to a \$15 minimum wage on January 1, 2019, with annual adjustments by Ontario’s consumer price index;

“Make it easier to join unions, especially for workers in the temporary help, home care, community services and building services sectors;

“Make client companies responsible for workplace health and safety for temporary agency employees;

“Provide strong enforcement through the hiring of an additional 175 employment standards officers;

“Will ensure workers have modest improvements in the scheduling of their hours, including:

“—three hours’ pay when workers are expected to be on call all day, but are not called into work;

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“—three hours’ pay for any employee whose shift is cancelled with less than two days’ notice; and

“—the right to refuse shifts without penalty if the shift is scheduled with fewer than four days’ notice;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to honour these commitments, including the \$15 minimum wage and fairer scheduling rules set to take effect on January 1, 2019. We further call on the assembly to take all necessary steps to enforce these laws and extend them to ensure no worker is left without protection.”

I will sign this petition again and give this to page Katie.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mrs. Gila Martow: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, like many Ontario communities, the toll that drugs and alcohol have taken on Sarnia–Lambton is tremendous, but we have hope and importantly, we have a plan;

“Whereas a proposal for a permanent withdrawal management facility has been developed with input from many organizations in our community using the most current research available on withdrawal management;

“Whereas our plan is a vision of teamwork: a one-stop hub for addictions services, improving access to services

and bringing care partners together for a team approach to caring for our community;

“Whereas a permanent facility would provide day, community and residential withdrawal management services, stabilization services and wraparound services for people who are battling their addictions;

“Whereas there is currently a temporary location providing some of these much-needed services but together we can provide better care and improve access to treatment for clients;

“Whereas our need is urgent, our plan is in place;

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

“That members of the Legislature please help us save lives and support our community members by supporting permanent withdrawal management services in Sarnia–Lambton.”

Of course, I affix my signature and give it to page Deven.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Mike Schreiner: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in support of basic income.

“Whereas the Progressive Conservative Party has promised to continue the Basic Income Pilot during the 2018 election campaign;

“Whereas there has been no indication that the Basic Income Pilot was not working to lift people out of poverty and the government refuses to release any official economic analysis or facts to support the elimination of the program;

“Whereas basic income programs have received support from across the political spectrum and from esteemed economists as a financially responsible and effective way to eliminate poverty;

“Whereas people in Ontario on ODSP and Ontario Works are currently living far below the poverty line;

“Whereas the cancellation of the Basic Income Pilot will damage the lives of our most vulnerable citizens and end up costing us more in health care, policing and emergency services.

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to restore the Basic Income Pilot program.”

I support this petition, will affix my signature and ask page Vedikaa to take it to the table.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: This petition is entitled “Support Sarnia’s Permanent Residential Withdrawal Management Facility.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, like many Ontario communities, the toll that drugs and alcohol have taken on Sarnia–Lambton is tremendous, but we have hope and importantly, we have a plan;

“Whereas a proposal for a permanent withdrawal management facility has been developed with input from many

organizations in our community using the most current research available on withdrawal management;

“Whereas our plan is a vision of teamwork: a one-stop hub for addictions services, improving access to services and bringing care partners together for a team approach to caring for our community;

“Whereas a permanent facility would provide day, community and residential withdrawal management services, stabilization services and wraparound services for people who are battling their addictions;

“Whereas there is currently a temporary location providing some of these much-needed services but together we can provide better care and improve access to treatment for clients;

“Whereas our need is urgent, our plan is in place;

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

“That members of the Legislature please help us save lives and support our community members by supporting permanent withdrawal management services in Sarnia–Lambton.”

I affix my signature and give it to page Deven.

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a petition called “Workers’ Comp is a Right.”

“Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I wholeheartedly support this, will affix my name and send it with page Derek to the table.

MENTAL HEALTH
AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Jill Dunlop: I have a petition entitled “Support Sarnia’s Permanent Residential Withdrawal Management Facility.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, like many Ontario communities, the toll that drugs and alcohol have taken on Sarnia–Lambton is tremendous, but we have hope and importantly, we have a plan;

“Whereas a proposal for a permanent withdrawal management facility has been developed with input from many organizations in our community using the most current research available on withdrawal management;

“Whereas our plan is a vision of teamwork: a one-stop hub for addictions services, improving access to services and bringing care partners together for a team approach to caring for our community;

“Whereas a permanent facility would provide day, community and residential withdrawal management services, stabilization services and wraparound services for people who are battling their addictions;

“Whereas there is currently a temporary location providing some of these much-needed services but together we can provide better care and improve access to treatment for clients;

“Whereas our need is urgent, our plan is in place;

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

I support this petition, affix my signature and give it to page Martin.

MENTAL HEALTH
AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: The petition is to support Sarnia’s permanent residential withdrawal management facility.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, like many Ontario communities, the toll that drugs and alcohol have taken on Sarnia–Lambton is tremendous, but we have hope and importantly, we have a plan;

“Whereas a proposal for a permanent withdrawal management facility has been developed with input from many organizations in our community using the most current research available on withdrawal management;

“Whereas our plan is a vision of teamwork: a one-stop hub for addictions services, improving access to services and bringing care partners together for a team approach to caring for our community;

“Whereas a permanent facility would provide day, community and residential withdrawal management services, stabilization services and wraparound services for people who are battling their addictions;

“Whereas there is currently a temporary location providing some of these much-needed services but together we can provide better care and improve access to treatment for clients;

“Whereas our need is urgent, our plan is in place;

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

“That members of the Legislature please help us save lives and support our community members by supporting permanent withdrawal management services in Sarnia–Lambton.”

I support the petition and I will put my signature on it now.

INJURED WORKERS

Mr. Joel Harden: I have a petition to support corporate welfare—oh, sorry, that’s a Tory petition. My mistake. I misread this.

I have a petition to support “Workers’ Comp is a Right.”

“Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Prevent compensation from being reduced or denied based on ‘pre-existing conditions....’”

I wholeheartedly support this and will pass it to page Molly for the Clerks.

1600

MENTAL HEALTH
AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: I rise today to support the petition to support Sarnia’s permanent residential withdrawal management facility.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, like many Ontario communities, the toll that drugs and alcohol have taken on Sarnia–Lambton is tremendous, but we have hope and importantly, we have a plan;

“Whereas a proposal for a permanent withdrawal management facility has been developed with input from many

organizations in our community using the most current research available on withdrawal management;

“Whereas our plan is a vision of teamwork: a one-stop hub for addictions services, improving access to services and bringing care partners together for a team approach to caring for our community;

“Whereas a permanent facility would provide day, community and residential withdrawal management services, stabilization services and wraparound services for people who are battling their addictions;

“Whereas there is currently a temporary location providing some of these much-needed services but together we can provide better care and improve access to treatment for clients;

“Whereas our need is urgent, our plan is in place;

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

“That members of the Legislature please help us save lives and support our community members by supporting permanent withdrawal management services in Sarnia-Lambton.”

I’ll support this petition by signing it, and give it to one of the pages.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CAP AND TRADE CANCELLATION ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 ANNULANT LE PROGRAMME DE PLAFONNEMENT ET D’ÉCHANGE

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 13, 2018, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 4, An Act respecting the preparation of a climate change plan, providing for the wind down of the cap and trade program and repealing the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act, 2016 / Projet de loi 4, Loi concernant l’élaboration d’un plan sur le changement climatique, prévoyant la liquidation du programme de plafonnement et d’échange et abrogeant la Loi de 2016 sur l’atténuation du changement climatique et une économie sobre en carbone.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 3, 2018, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Phillips has moved second reading of Bill 4, An Act respecting the preparation of a climate change plan, providing for the wind down of the cap and trade program and repealing the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act, 2016.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The bill is now referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

ACCESS TO NATURAL GAS ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR L’ACCÈS AU GAZ NATUREL

Mr. McNaughton moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 32, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 32, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l’énergie de l’Ontario.

Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to Mr. McNaughton.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’m pleased to rise today for the second reading of Bill 32, the proposed Access to Natural Gas Act, 2018, legislation that, if passed, would allow government to develop a program to bring natural gas to more families and businesses throughout rural, remote and northern Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I’m pleased to tell you that I will be sharing my time this afternoon with my parliamentary secretary, the member from King–Vaughan—

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: Parliamentary assistant.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Sorry, parliamentary assistant. Thanks to the former Premier for that. Thank you.

Also, I want to thank the Minister of Energy, Minister Rickford, and his staff within that ministry for their assistance in developing this legislation, Bill 32.

Our government made a promise to provide the people of Ontario with relief for their energy costs, and to provide energy which is affordable, accessible and can benefit everyone in the province of Ontario. As most MPPs know in this Legislature, in too many parts of rural and northern Ontario, families and businesses still do not have access to natural gas. In fact, in southwestern Ontario, where I was born and raised and where I still call home, an estimated 40% of households do not have access to natural gas. Our government understands that people are facing high energy bills, especially if they have to depend on electricity, oil or propane to heat their homes.

Mr. Speaker, 15 years of Liberal government have meant energy poverty for many in our province. Ontario’s hydro rates, the highest in North America over the years, forced people to choose between eating and heating, and severely hindered Ontario’s rural economy. Expanding access to natural gas will put money back in people’s pockets. Estimates suggest that residential customers and families can save between \$800 and \$2,500 per year just by switching from electric heat, propane or oil to natural gas. That’s a big savings for the people in rural and northern communities.

We want to make it possible for more people to make the switch, giving people the choice, opportunity and ease, demonstrating that this a government that puts the people of Ontario first. This builds on the government’s work to stand up for the people of Ontario by removing the carbon tax from natural gas bills, saving families about \$80 a year and small businesses approximately \$285 per year.

So we’ve introduced proposed legislation that would enable the private sector to deliver natural gas for up to 78 communities and up to 33,000 new natural gas customers

across Ontario over the next several years. As of October 1, we've removed the Ontario carbon tax from natural gas bills, which will save families—as I said a moment ago—\$80 per year, and small businesses, \$285.

We're moving away from the previous government's natural gas subsidy program. Instead of a one-time program, our government believes in a long-term, predictable and sustainable approach, a strong difference from the previous government, which not only considered banning private sector participation in natural gas, but tried to ban natural gas altogether in Ontario. It really concerned, I know, thousands and thousands of people when the former government had that document leaked to the media where they were considering banning natural gas.

Having access to natural gas makes life more affordable and puts more money back in people's pockets. Lowering the cost of living gives people more money to reinvest in our communities and in our economy. Expanding natural gas would also make Ontario communities more attractive for job creation and new businesses. This is part of our government's plan to bring quality jobs back to Ontario and to send to a clear message that Ontario is open for business.

This plan is overwhelmingly supported by the private sector. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce recently wrote: "Premier Ford's plan to develop a new natural gas program ... will not only help to make life more affordable for Ontarians but boost job creation and economic growth in rural and northern Ontario communities." This endorsement tells us, as legislators here at Queen's Park, that we are doing the right thing.

Instead of a program that hand-picks a small number of communities, this legislation will open the possibility for natural gas expansion to a much larger number of communities in Ontario. That means more affordable home heating, more money back in people's pockets, more opportunity for our farmers. It will create and protect jobs and spur economic growth.

1610

Mr. Speaker, I said it before and I'll say it again: Ontario is open for business. The chamber of commerce's sentiment echoes what we continue to hear from people across our province: that natural gas expansion is important to them.

Last month, for example, I had the opportunity, with many colleagues here in the Legislature, to attend the International Plowing Match in Pain Court in Chatham-Kent, where the Premier announced our government's plans to expand natural gas access across the province. I can tell you, the message I heard from folks at the plowing match was clear: People want more access to natural gas.

As you can imagine, I was delighted that the Premier and so many of our caucus colleagues got to experience first-hand what makes Chatham-Kent such a special place. It was great to welcome so many people; in fact, I think almost 100,000 people attended the International Plowing Match in Pain Court, which is in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

As anyone who has visited rural Ontario knows, the plowing match is a highlight on the calendar in Ontario politics because it is a chance to rediscover and reconnect. It is also a great way to showcase life in rural Ontario. By taking the time to meet with the families and people in rural Ontario, we got to see the strong sense of community and better understand how local infrastructure projects can help meet the needs of our communities. We also got to see some of the hard work farmers do every day to bring food to our plate and contribute to our overall economy. As the International Plowing Match demonstrates, rural Ontario is a significant driver of our overall economy.

Actually, Speaker, let me take a moment to share some numbers with you. Rural Ontario contributes \$106 billion to the province's GDP and supports 1.2 million jobs. This data from Statistics Canada is based mainly on wages and salaries. It also includes contributions employers make to social insurance plans, such as pension plans, on behalf of their employees; production of goods and services by unincorporated businesses, such as self-employed people—and we all know many friends and family members and people in our community who are self-employed. This also includes gross profits of corporations and government business enterprises, and indirect taxes less subsidies.

The agri-food industry—everything involved in bringing people food, from the farm to the plate—employs about one in eight workers in Ontario. This is across farming, farm supply, processing and distribution industries. Ontario's agri-food sector remains one of the most diversified in the world, with almost 50,000 farms producing more than 200 commodities.

With natural gas, our farmers would have more opportunities to leverage modern technology to grow our food. A perfect example is in the booming greenhouse industry in southwestern Ontario, whether that's in my home riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, in Sarnia-Lambton, in Chatham-Kent-Leamington, in Niagara West—many of our ridings.

As reported last month in the Blackburn News, OFA past president Don McCabe said, "When natural gas is your cheapest fuel for grain drying and animal welfare issues, along with our greenhouse industry which requires heat, this is a major league issue." This is obviously coming from the OFA, and I'm going to talk about that more. This was such a demand of theirs and a worthwhile cause that they've championed for many years. So I thank past president Don McCabe and all the members of the OFA for their long-continued advocacy to get government to expand natural gas across rural and remote communities.

Northern Ontario is also a key driver of our overall economy, and expanding natural gas in the north could potentially benefit industries such as transportation. For example, establishing more natural gas fuelling stations could enable regional bus fleets, commercial trucking/tractor-trailers, and long-haul trucking fleets to switch from diesel to cleaner and more affordable compressed natural gas.

As you know, transit projects across the province are a big priority for us in government. Ontario's current infrastructure agreement with the federal government provides for \$11.8 billion in infrastructure investments across the province, including \$8.3 billion for public transit. Speaker, expanding access to natural gas could help support our focus on transit projects as we deliver on our promise to get Ontario moving.

Expanding natural gas could also benefit the mining sector. Here are some key numbers that we all need to consider: Mineral production in Ontario supports 26,000 direct jobs and 50,000 indirect jobs associated with mineral manufacturing and processing. Mining is the second-largest private sector employer of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Some 25% of mining jobs in Canada are in Ontario, and two thirds of those are in northern Ontario.

Given the need for natural gas across Ontario, I think it is important to point out that our proposed legislation is not a one-off approach. Rather, it would create a sustainable path to have the private sector participate in natural gas expansion across our province. If passed, this legislation would encourage private gas distributors to partner with communities to develop projects that expand access to affordable and efficient natural gas to remote, rural and northern communities. Once again, we're moving away from the legacy of a Liberal government which deliberately banned private sector participation and attempted, quite frankly—or at least had a supporting document that they were considering getting rid of natural gas altogether in Ontario.

The proposed bill would, if enacted, amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998, to enable gas distributors to add a small charge to existing customers' natural gas bills to help cover the cost of expanding access. Any charges for consumers would be minimal compared to the savings that families and businesses would already receive from our government's decision to remove the cap-and-trade carbon tax from natural gas bills. The proposed new program would deliver decades of benefits to potentially dozens and dozens of communities across Ontario at no additional cost to the taxpayers while keeping existing natural gas costs low.

Investments in infrastructure have a direct and indirect impact on our economy. In fact, Mr. Speaker, a recent study by the Centre for Spatial Economics highlighted some of these benefits. The study found that the long-term economic return to the province, as measured by GDP, is up to \$6 for every dollar invested in infrastructure. But to realize these benefits, it's important to ensure that we invest in the right infrastructure at the right time and in the right place. When done right, investments in infrastructure can help to lower business costs and attract more business to Ontario. Our government has every confidence in our plan to expand natural gas. We consider this the right move, enabling access to rural, remote and northern communities. As mentioned, any charges for consumers would be minimal compared to the savings that families and businesses would already receive from our government's

decision to remove the former government's cap-and-trade carbon tax from natural gas bills.

If the proposed legislation is passed, Mr. Speaker, the government would work with the Ontario Energy Board to develop program criteria and regulations to enable implementation of this program. Exact details of the program, including which customers would be eligible to receive support, would be set out transparently in regulations if the proposed legislation is passed and related approvals are received. Our government will be responsible, modest and pragmatic as we deliver on our mandate.

Speaker, by making a small investment today, we know it will have a long-lasting impact in communities for years to come. Access to natural gas is a key part of supporting economic growth in all of our communities and is an important focus of our government. We know we have challenges in other areas like health care, where infrastructure may be part of the solution.

Speaker, my ministry is committed to ensuring we are getting the most out of our existing infrastructure and making the right investments, as I said a few moments ago, in the right places.

1620

Today I am thrilled to be here to help move this important proposed legislation forward for all of Ontario. I think this is one of the greatest things that we can do: to expand natural gas to rural and remote communities, including those Indigenous communities. This opens up Ontario for business. It lowers energy costs for those families living in rural and northern communities and in those Indigenous communities as well.

Speaker, we were clearly elected on a mandate to put the people first and show that Ontario is open for business. It is unacceptable that in Ontario, there are people who have to choose between heating and eating, especially if this comes as a result of the actions of the previous government. By providing the people of Ontario with hydro relief and by providing them with access to sustainable, affordable natural gas, we are demonstrating, time and again, that this is a government for the people.

I do want to talk a bit about some strong words of encouragement from the OFA. I mentioned the former president of the OFA, Don McCabe, who happens to be a farmer in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. I know he spends a lot of time in Sarnia-Lambton. In fact, he was at Queen's Park yesterday with representatives from the OFA.

The OFA had essentially a position paper. I'd like to just read it into Hansard so it's on the record, the OFA's natural gas infrastructure overview:

"Natural gas is a clean, affordable energy source that is readily available in urban Ontario. OFA believes natural gas expansion to farms and rural communities should be top priority when it comes to investing in infrastructure in rural Ontario. Affordable natural gas is the single most important investment that will give farms, businesses and rural residents the competitive edge to drive growth.

“OFA is working with provincial government, industry and gas distribution companies to develop a fair and equitable way to install new natural gas pipeline across rural Ontario every year for the next 20 years.

“Energy is one of the largest inputs on farms, and a significant cost to rural residents and local business owners. If natural gas was available across the province, it could save Ontario farmers, business owners and rural residents more than \$1 billion in annual energy costs.”

I’m going to just deviate for a moment from the OFA position. Mr. Speaker, I’ve been up a number of times in the House, and the facts speak clearly to the benefits of natural gas when you recognize and agree that households who switch to natural gas can save up to \$2,500 per year. That’s a huge savings, Mr. Speaker, and one of the benefits to this legislation, to really provide relief for those families and businesses.

I’m going to continue. The OFA goes on to say:

“New rural gas pipeline infrastructure will also enable rural agricultural communities to produce clean ... renewable natural gas for pipeline delivery. Expanding affordable, accessible natural gas to farms and rural Ontario will dramatically boost business opportunities by significantly lowering energy costs.”

Again, I know we all see it in our communities. When that natural gas line runs down a back road, whether it’s in southwestern Ontario or elsewhere, it gets expanded; those farm operations grow. As they grow, they hire more people. As I said, our government’s priority is to ensure that we’re creating good-paying jobs in Ontario, and this falls right in line with that campaign commitment.

Mr. Speaker, the OFA have been very clear:

“Rural Ontario needs access to natural gas infrastructure to provide reliable and affordable energy options for farms and rural businesses. The expansion of natural gas throughout rural Ontario is the single most important investment the Ontario government can make to support thriving farm and rural businesses.”

I happen to have here with me the press release that the OFA put out on September 18 of this year, 2018, after we announced at the International Plowing Match our intention to introduce legislation to expand natural gas access in Ontario. Of course, I’m proud to read this into the record, Mr. Speaker:

“Ontario Premier Doug Ford announced promising news for Ontario farmers, businesses and rural communities today with proposed new legislation that would expand access to natural gas in rural and northern Ontario. ‘We have been pushing for the need for more widespread, affordable natural gas energy across rural Ontario, so this is encouraging news for the agricultural community,’ says Keith Currie, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture....

“Ford used opening day of the International Plowing Match and Rural Expo to announce the government’s plans to introduce a new Access to Natural Gas Act that would encourage partnerships between private gas distributors and communities to develop projects that expand access to natural gas.”

I think that’s a ringing endorsement from a key stakeholder.

Hon. Jim Wilson: Game-changer.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: As the Minister of Economic Development said, it’s a game-changer for our province, particularly for those businesses and families in rural and northern Ontario.

I do want to also pay tribute to the current president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Keith Curry. I was honoured to meet with him yesterday, as I know a number of my colleagues were as well. The OFA continues to advocate to be the voice of those farm operations, farm families—

Interjection: A strong voice.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: A strong voice for those families and businesses in rural Ontario. We had an opportunity, I know, within the Ministry of Infrastructure, to have a round table with them yesterday. It was just great to have them at Queen’s Park and for them to meet with all MPPs in all different parties to advocate those issues.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to move on in the last seven or eight minutes that I have, before my parliamentary assistant will take over for the last half an hour. I want to talk about the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and something that they posted on their website. Of course, the Ontario chamber is a strong voice for those employers across Ontario. They advocate on behalf of those employers to get government moving in the direction that will create private sector growth and job growth in the province. I always value, myself, over the years—since I’ve been here for seven years—what the chamber of commerce says. On their website, they had, I guess, a position. It says:

“Ontario Business Community Supports Proposed Natural Gas Expansion.

“Rocco Rossi, president and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, released the following statement in response to Premier Doug Ford’s new proposed natural gas program.

“We are pleased to hear about Premier’s Ford plan to develop a new natural gas program. The proposed natural gas expansion will not only help to make life more affordable for Ontarians but boost job creation and economic growth in rural and northern Ontario....

“We have been consistently urging the Ontario government to expand natural gas access as it is a clean and affordable option for powering homes and businesses across the province. At a time when businesses are struggling to invest in and grow their operations, we will continue to advocate on behalf of our diverse network of 60,000 members to make energy more affordable. The OCC is committed to working with the government of Ontario to create a prosperous province.”

Mr. Speaker, I think that’s a ringing endorsement from Rocco Rossi. They represent 60,000 members across Ontario, so that’s great news, that we have the business community on side. It’s important that we listen to them. I personally have long been on the record—over the last 15 years—that the former government, quite frankly, in particular the last few years, really took this attitude of closing

Ontario for business. I think that's why it was important that we move decisively and quickly after being sworn in on June 30 to make a number of changes, whether it was this particular piece of legislation expanding natural gas access, to cancelling 758 wasteful, unnecessary, expensive energy contracts across the province, which is going to save taxpayers \$790 million. Mr. Speaker, that's \$790 million of costs out of the electricity system.

1630

In my own backyard, outside of Wallaceburg, the Otter Creek wind turbine project was opposed by nearly everyone in that community, so I commend the Minister of Energy and, of course, our Premier for making the decision to get out of those expensive and unnecessary projects, which should never have been put in the stream to be hooked up to begin with.

I often recall, in the campaign, we on this side of the House, on the PC side, said that we're going to open Ontario for business. I know my local NDP candidate was out talking about how they were going to close down one of the nuclear plants in Ontario, and I would say at these all-candidates' debates, "Why would the NDP close a nuclear plant and replace that nuclear power with more wind turbines in communities where those people didn't want them?" Those subsidies were so expensive for these projects, so I just can't thank our Premier and our Minister of Energy enough for moving decisively to cancel those and really get energy bills down for those families and for those people in Ontario.

So Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all of those people across Ontario who have written and phoned our offices to thank us for introducing this legislation, for letting us know the importance of expanding natural gas in their communities. I know there are thousands of people across Ontario anxiously awaiting the debate on this legislation and, if we're successful in passing this bill in the Legislature, for us to be able to expand natural gas. It's going to make the quality of life for families, for businesses, for those people living in rural or remote communities, Indigenous communities—this is going to be a new lease on life for many people and make life more affordable: as I said, \$2,500 in savings—up to \$2,500—per year. That money can be spent at local stores or just help families out by putting more money back in their pockets.

This is going to have such a lasting impact right across this province. It's going to grow our economy and create jobs. I know those almost 80 communities and those 33,000 people are going to be much better off if all of us, together, in this House pass Bill 32. Let's expand natural gas. We've been talking about it for decades. This is, finally, the piece of legislation that we need to get the job done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing with debate, I recognize the member from King–Vaughan.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I want to, first off, thank the minister for his leadership in bringing forth this legislation—legislation that I believe is good for the economy and good for the consumers of this province. I rise today in support of second reading of Bill 32, the proposed Access to Natural Gas Act, 2018. As I said, I want to thank

the Minister of Infrastructure for not just introducing this bill—and, as we acknowledge, if it passes—but for understanding that we need to put more money back into the pockets of working people in this province.

Mr. Speaker, our government made a commitment; we made a promise to put people first and make life easier and more affordable for families and businesses in this province, while sending a clear message, as the minister enumerated, that Ontario is open for business. Since day one, we've been working to help keep that promise, to ensure we deliver on our word, from addressing governance at Hydro One, to terminating unnecessary renewable energy contracts, to listening to what people told us was wrong with Ontario's electricity system, and we have taken immediate action to correct those very issues. In Bill 32, the proposed Access to Natural Gas Act, we're taking another significant step forward in our commitment to the people of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, everywhere I go in Ontario—and I've had limited travel in southern Ontario. But certainly for our cabinet, which has travelled across the province, and for our members across the province, they keep saying the same thing: that the cost of living is too high, that it is too punitive for families and businesses that rely on natural gas to do business, and we are losing our competitive advantage in this province.

Notwithstanding those across the aisle—and I will recognize the members of the New Democratic Party for showing up to work today, unlike other members of this House. I will say to the former government and to the former party in this Legislature that there is serious concern that, for 15 years—

Mr. Joel Harden: Point of order, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Ottawa Centre on a point of order.

Mr. Joel Harden: Is the honourable member allowed to refer to people's absence in the House?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The honourable member is not allowed to refer to people who are not here by name or by riding, of which he did neither. So I recognize your point of order, but I will allow the member to continue. Thank you.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: Thank you, Speaker.

The point I'm making is, for the last 15 years, we've had a government that has not been concerned with the needs of working people, with small business in our province. For people in remote parts of this province, rural parts of this province, for our agricultural sector, for our industries in Ontario that, in part, rely on natural gas, we know there's more to do in this respect. That is the very basis, that is the motivation of why we're bringing forth this legislation today. That is part of what the minister has said about switching to natural gas—we know it can save the average customer in this province anywhere between \$800 and \$2,500 per year. And while 3.5 million homes and 130,000 businesses across Ontario already have access to natural gas, there are many in Ontario that don't, and most of those live in rural, remote and First Nations communities. They want access to natural gas to save

money, to grow their business, to create jobs and to compete in a global economy.

The previous Liberal government left many of our communities with the abysmal choice—and we all know this reality—of heating or eating. That is not something our government is willing to settle on. That is not something that our government is prepared to accept. We must raise the standard, raise the bar when it comes to advancing affordability for the people of this province, particularly the middle class. People are working hard in Ontario but are still not able to get by. We promised hydro relief, lower costs, higher accessibility for energy. This legislation, should it pass, will fulfill that mandate.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed Access to Natural Gas Act, 2018, if passed, would enable the creation of a new program that would support the expansion of natural gas in those communities across Ontario. The government would work with the Ontario Energy Board to develop program-specific criteria in regulations to enable the program over the fall of 2018. More details about the timing will become available as that work proceeds.

The proposed new program would deliver decades of benefits to potentially dozens of communities across Ontario at no additional cost to the taxpayer. I want to repeat that because I think it's important for those at home tuning in today for this exciting debate. I'm fired up to talk about natural gas this afternoon, no pun intended.

Laughter.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I even got a laugh from the opposition. This is good.

Interjection.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: Pun intended.

I will just say that we recognize that if we can liberalize access to natural gas and not have to impose additional costs to the taxpayer, that is a win-win. It is good for industry that wants a cheaper alternative to the other conventional methods of electrifying or electricity for the use of their products and machinery. It is also good for consumers, who, in many cases, don't have that choice, unfortunately, and as you will know, Mr. Speaker, in your riding and, really, in all of our ridings across Ontario.

By opening prosperity to dozens of rural, remote and other underserved communities, to 33,000 households over time, this will help grow business and create jobs in Ontario, which I believe is the central mandate of this government—to send a message to industry and to the world that this province, again, is open for business.

One of the reasons natural gas is such an affordable option for heating homes is the abundant supply available. According to Union Gas, “New, massive deposits ... in North America accessed through advanced technology have translated into record low gas prices. Natural gas is more affordable now than it was a decade ago and experts agree that natural gas will continue to be competitively priced well into the” future.

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Speaking of advanced technology, the proposed new program would further provide farmers with opportunities to leverage modern technology.

In my riding, especially in the community of King and the centre-northern part of York region, where we still have a very robust agricultural sector, dairy producers, a horticultural sector and the Holland Marsh, shared with the Attorney General's riding, we're very proud of our agricultural sector. I know that yesterday we stood with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and with my colleagues here to send a symbolic message that we are with our farmers, especially at this time of uncertainty, given the USMCA deal and the fact that the federal government has not fulfilled their duty to our farmers to compensate them fairly for losses they may incur as a result of this deal.

Having said that, the reason why I mention my riding is because in that community there are many, many farmers that need to have that technology in order to access markets and access the marketplace. Part of it is broadband; part of it is natural gas. We are, as you know, Mr. Speaker, delivering meaningful results on both areas, both tracks, to help improve the competitiveness of our farming community and our agricultural sector in Ontario. This will help rural and agricultural communities and provide support for our booming greenhouse industry right across Ontario.

The proposed program would encourage more partnerships between private gas distributors and communities to develop projects that expand access to affordable and efficient natural gas. We will work across the Ontario government and with our community partners to foster a robust economic climate in Ontario. We want to leverage the capacity of the private sector. This is an important point, because it is a differentiator amongst the parties in this House. We believe there is a market solution, a private sector alternative, to the government mandate of delivering all things. We are leveraging the private sector to enable more communities, more people and more small business to have access to, in this case, natural gas. That is a philosophical difference with the opposition.

Look, to be fair, the people of Ontario gave us a vote of their support, when they gave us an overwhelming mandate in June, to look at alternative methods of delivery of both government services and private services. I'm proud—I am very proud—that our government is looking at, in this case, a no-cost solution for delivering a commodity that is so important to so many people in the province. The fact that the private sector is part of the solution I think speaks volumes about the cultural change that happened in June with the election of Premier Doug Ford. That we are going to leverage private capital, private ingenuity and the potential of our people in the private sectors, working with the public sector, to deliver goods and services and improve the quality of life for every Ontarian is a good thing, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very proud of that record. We will work across the Ontario government and with all those partners to deliver on that mandate, because we believe that delivering vital infrastructure is important; it's part of the mandate of government. But we also believe that ensuring we can bring prices down for consumers and businesses is at the very core of what this government is here for.

Obviously, with time, I'll speak about the choice before the public and what they opted for. What they voted for in this election was a political party—a vehicle for affordability. We are doing that. We are doing that in every single measurement, from income taxes to hydro rates to natural gas. In every single realm, we are trying to incent competition in the marketplace. We are trying to create an economy where businesses can compete, where small businesses can thrive, where we're not punishing entrepreneurship in this province. For literally 15 years—and unfortunately this problem is now being exacerbated by the federal government—we've had a war on success, a war on entrepreneurship. I'm not being dramatic in my words when we have small businesses in Ontario that, increasingly, have had to close, shutter jobs and limit their hours for their workers because we've made Ontario so uncompetitive.

There should be a sense of unity of purpose in this Legislature when it comes to enabling small businesses—I'm not even talking about the big guys. This is something I like to believe the members opposite and I could agree on, that for small businesses, the engine of our economy—over eight in 10 jobs in this country depend on the success of our small business community. We should be united in defence of this industry because people in our communities, in small towns and villages in every single one of our ridings, depend on this success. We, this government, this party and this Premier, are determined to stand with this community every step of the way to enable their success.

As I mentioned earlier, we believe that this legislation, should it pass—part and parcel of our broader economic reforms—will stimulate growth, will ensure prosperity in Ontario and create good value-added jobs for the next generation. We are committed to exploring ways to expand access to natural gas. That will make life more affordable and attract those types of jobs we speak about: good value-added jobs, well-paying jobs, meaningful jobs that I know many people of all ages in our constituencies desire and aspire to.

This is part of our government's plan to bring quality jobs back to Ontario. I think it was in this chamber yesterday, if I'm not mistaken, that the Premier in one of his responses to the leader of Her Majesty's opposition spoke about the record of the former government. I found it rather curious to hear a defence of the former government by the NDP, but the fact is 300,000 people—there's a multiplying effect, because they have families, they have spouses, they have children and they have communities that these jobs help. Some 300,000 people—the multiplying effect is no doubt much larger than the 300,000 people—lost their jobs in manufacturing. These are good jobs, often union jobs. These are decent jobs with dignity. How is it that we have permitted Ontario to lose over 250,000 good-paying jobs, blue-collar jobs—folks who wake up every day with the aspiration to put food on their table and help their kids get a good education.

We should be standing up for these jobs. We should not allow ourselves our blind affinity to ideology over pragmatism, because when we impose higher taxes on people,

when we suggest that it's okay—when you have a great sense, Mr. Speaker, of someone who observes the challenges facing everyday Ontarians and you hear a political party or a politician of any stripe suggest higher taxes: “Look, it is what it is. You're just going to have to pay your fair share.” An extra couple of cents of carbon taxation—you don't mind, Mr. Speaker; I'm sure your constituents do mind, contrary to the popular belief of members in this Legislature. Raising taxes is not an abstraction. When we increase carbon taxation, when we increase prices on home heating, on natural gas, on gasoline—folks, this is not an issue paid by someone down the street; this is your neighbour and these are your constituents having to fork over hundreds and often thousands of dollars more, because governments can't live within their means, because they can't get their act together.

The issue is not a revenue problem in this province; it is a spending problem. The President of the Treasury Board has said this before. The solution to all problems in government is not to add a tax. I often hear members in this House speak—and I think authentically, with great concern—about the loss of those jobs. Mr. Speaker, you are complicit to the loss of those jobs if you're comfortable imposing more taxes and regulations that undermine the competitiveness of those businesses. It is so easy to talk about the plight of 300,000 lost jobs in manufacturing, which affected no doubt many members in all of our ridings, certainly those who are privileged to represent communities in and around southern Ontario but, to be fair, these are jobs that were affected in the supply chain right across the province.

Members in this Legislature who are comforted by the concept of increasing taxes on a sector of our economy or any community in the business world—small or large industry—must acknowledge that the loss of jobs is a direct consequence of the imposition of higher taxes, higher regs, more red tape and just a generally uncompetitive jurisdiction to invest in. As I understand, foreign direct investment in this province has declined over time.

We must be part of the solution. Talking points and rhetoric and concern and empathy for those people who lost jobs is part of it, I think, but it's not the secret sauce, if you will, to fixing the problem. The problem is defined as an economy over-regulated and overly taxed. The solution, conversely, is to make this province competitive, to bring down our corporate tax rate, as we see in many of our counterparts and our trading partners in the northeast of the United States. All over the United States—you may like the administration of those subnational governments or not; that's immaterial. But businesses will flow to where it is more competitive and more affordable to do business.

When you have affordable hydro rates in those states, when you have a lower labour cost in those states—our provinces, I will submit—when you have a lower corporate income tax, when you have a dramatically reduced regulatory burden and less red tape, obviously businesses will flow outbound. It is the objective and mandate of this

government to reverse that trend, to change the trajectory to bring investment back to Ontario.

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I want to be part of a party—and I want to challenge all members to be part of the solution. I think we are part of that solution.

There's a member of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. He's a notable person by the name of Mr. Rocco Rossi. We've all heard of him, no doubt have met him, the CEO and president of the Ontario chamber. So for members opposite listening, don't listen to me. Perhaps they challenge my authority on this subject. But speak to a person who works every day representing tens of thousands—over 60,000—businesses in this province. Listen to his words. Let his words inform your decisions on how you're going to vote on this bill.

I'm going to quote him, Mr. Speaker, if I may.

"We have been consistently urging the Ontario government to expand natural gas access as it is a clean and affordable option for powering homes and businesses across the province. At a time when businesses are struggling to invest in and grow their operations, we will continue to advocate on behalf of our ... 60,000 members to make energy more affordable. The OCC is committed to working with the government of Ontario to create a prosperous province."

Mr. Speaker, there are other stakeholders, other leaders in business and industry, who agree, who accept the premise of the president of the Ontario chamber and who agree with so many Ontarians who want to make sure that energy, which is such a requisite ingredient for our industry to produce, for our ability to be competitive—we know that we should not punish those who use it.

The CEO of the Ontario Home Builders' Association also provided a very notable perspective on the proposed natural gas reforms and legislation. I'm going to quote again, Mr. Speaker: "Support future housing supply and choice in rural and northern communities while providing homeowners and businesses with an affordable and reliable heating option that will keep their everyday costs down." He believes, like the president of the Ontario chamber and like dozens and dozens of other leaders in industry and non-profits and others believe, that natural gas reductions will actually not just be good for business, which perhaps members of this House do not particularly like ideologically, but good for their workers, because we have an objective to maintain our employment complement in Ontario. While we can wage war on industry and on business, let us not forget the people who occupy those businesses, the working people in our riding who depend on the vitality of their businesses and on their employers at least being able to compete.

Mr. Speaker, this proposed legislation builds on our government's record to stand up for the people of Ontario by removing the cap-and-trade carbon tax from natural gas bills. I recall some weeks ago the federal Parliamentary Budget Officer of this country put out a report that said that by introducing a carbon tax—and the reason why this is so noteworthy to me is because the federal government

did not, in their own judgment, provide the costs associated with a carbon tax on the consumer, on the homeowner and on a family, which I think is wrong, Mr. Speaker. If you're going to introduce a tax, you should be able to defend it and understand the consequence and costs to working people in Ontario.

The PBO did a report, and that report suggested that \$10 billion would be lost from the economy by imposing that. Now, \$10 billion sounds like a lot of money—it is a lot of money—but let's bring that down to the average person watching at home. For folks in these businesses, on these shop floors, who want to keep their jobs and who perhaps, because the cost of living has gotten so expensive between local, provincial and federal governments—all government, but no doubt the former provincial government certainly did their part to leave a legacy of unaffordability in Ontario. But we know that a carbon tax is not going to help industry return to Ontario, and it's certainly not going to help the working people.

I do not want to punish a farmer in my riding, or a person in a remote part of this province. I don't want to punish someone who has to drive, who is forced to drive and doesn't have the option of the TTC or public transit. There are many members, I'm sure, quietly on all sides who accept the premise that while a carbon tax may achieve some altruism for those on the far left, the fact of the matter is that it is an indictment and a punishment on people who have to drive to get to work, drive to get their kids to school, drive to get groceries, drive because they live 15, 20 or 50 kilometres from a city centre or any sort of urban core. Mr. Speaker, that is unfair.

The unequal application of this tax is so unfair, and this government is absolutely resolved to stand up against the federal government's imposition of this carbon tax. We feel vigorously in the defence of our provincial interests. Yes, we will bring the Prime Minister to court and yes, we will defend businesses in Ontario that are struggling already, because I'm not going to permit myself as a member to exacerbate an existing problem in Ontario, and I would submit our entire caucus will not. Every single one of us has to answer this question: Are you going to be part of the solution to affordability or are you going to exacerbate or compound the problem and make it worse?

I know where our folks are sitting. Conservatives on this side and in our party are standing up against the carbon tax and standing for affordability in Ontario. Mr. Speaker, we are taking the next step to ensure the benefits of natural gas expansion are shared across this province. I would like to re-emphasize that expanding access to natural gas would make life affordable for everyday Ontarians. The proposed program will help families switch off costly electricity, propane and oil, and access the affordable fuel that they deserve.

Our government recognizes that whether you live in our province's biggest cities or in our smallest towns, hamlets and villages, investing in infrastructure both grows our economy and protects critical assets. This includes getting our highways and roads back into shape for families, workers and businesses who use them every day, making

our hospitals state of the art, and modernizing schools so they can run efficiently.

With regard to natural gas, Mr. Speaker, we look forward to working with utilities, with communities, with the Ontario Energy Board in helping to make Ontario prosperous and more affordable for the people.

Now, one thing is clear: This province has been left in bad shape—I'm being generous in my nomenclature, Mr. Speaker—by 15 years of Liberal mismanagement on this issue. Ontarians want change, and part of that change is ensuring that they are given proper, affordable choices when it comes to energy in Ontario.

As I said at the start, our government promised to put people first. We promised to make life more affordable. One of the first acts we did when we returned to the Legislature—unprecedented, I will remind folks. Because we would not be here—I'm going to surmise for a moment, but I don't think we'd be here if the other parties were elected. But this Premier, in a determination to get to work, to show the people of Ontario that we're going to roll up our sleeves to get things done—Mr. Speaker, it's about time. It is high time that legislators do what is necessary, what is right to advance the objective of affordability. It cannot be a talking point. It must be realized manifestly by real, important policies that move the lives of people forward.

We are doing that. The first legislation we brought, back in July when the House was recalled in an unprecedented return in the summer—we sat for a long time, we continue to sit, and I think we're rather motivated and privileged to have the opportunity to serve our constituents and to show up to work every single day. That includes midnight sittings and weekends. We are prepared to work through the night to show people that we are going to work hard for them. And Mr. Speaker, when we—

Applause.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: An important water break there—thank you so much, colleagues.

Look, Mr. Speaker, the first piece of legislation we introduced, which I think is actually rather tangential to what we're talking about today with the natural gas legislation—we brought forth legislation to scrap the cap-and-trade carbon tax. This in itself is going to put over \$200 back into an average person's pocket. Now, some members of this House, if I recall correctly, were ridiculing that, suggesting it's just small potatoes, that it's nothing significant. Incrementally, when you add up the aggregate total of all of these savings, we are literally putting thousands of dollars back into the pockets of working people. That is a positive thing. We cannot see this in isolation. We should be advancing a mission in this province of putting money back in the pockets of people.

Mr. Speaker, there are political parties within this Legislature—there's the New Democratic Party standing opposite who campaigned on a plan, on a program, to raise taxes. That is their choice and I respect that that was the campaign commitment they made. But what members of the New Democratic Party must accept is that the people of Ontario—not legislators, not insiders, but the people of

this province—made a determination in their sombre reflection on the choices and they rejected the socialist agenda of your political party. They embraced the free enterprise agenda of the Doug Ford government because they believe we can do more with less, because they believe affordability should be at the centrepiece of what government does. So I am proud to stand with a political party that is working every single day to advance the mission of affordability. I am proud to stand with a political party that is standing up against the federal government, that is asking the federal government to not make Ontario less competitive vis-à-vis our trading partners.

1700

I recall, in my time working federally, that we worked on trade agreements, trying to liberalize our trade agenda. We talk about trade. The USMCA is an issue du jour; it's an issue of consequence; it's an issue in the news. It's an issue that I'm sure seizes all of our members. I'm sure we all share in a legitimate anxiety with respect to our dairy farmers, with respect to our auto industry—pardon me; our steel and aluminum sectors—and our auto industry, given that there is a maximum production amount imposed on them. But I remember when we were working to liberalize trade access and opportunities for this country, working on Canada-European trade; working to diversify our trade; working to create jobs; looking to the private sector, leveraging them to be part of the solution, not always the first to be taxed, regulated and undermined. We worked collaboratively with the private sector to advance trade deals. We did this because we believe, Madam Speaker, that by doing so we were going to help create a competitive advantage. So we know that by lowering energy costs for people, we know that by lowering corporate income tax rates, we know that by lowering the regulatory burden and the red tape burden that has imposed so much cost on business, we know that we are going to leave a legacy for this province where people who aspire to work will have the dignity of work. That is our commitment to the people of Ontario.

Madam Speaker, as I said, our government promised to put people first. We promised to make life affordable. We promised to stand up for families. We promise to fight, every single day in this Legislature, against any government that imposes taxes on working people. And I'm proud, as I reflect on this journey—nearly 100 days—that I can say to my constituents, as I've said today, that we are on the right side of history, that we are defending what is right when it comes to affordability and economic prosperity. It's about making sure that people have the dignity of work in this province.

Mr. Speaker—Madam Speaker—I think there's a consensus on "Speaker." I want to reaffirm to this Legislature that this legislation, if passed, is going to put money back in the pockets of people. When you combine it with their opposition to the federal carbon tax, Justin Trudeau's imposition of higher taxes, Prime Minister Trudeau's imposition of higher taxes on working people, you add that to the elimination of the cap-and-trade carbon tax—when you put it all together, people are going to be better off. They already are better off, Madam Speaker. Should we

pass the Access to Natural Gas Act, 2018, I am assuring the people of Ontario, and this Legislature, that they will be better off: more access to natural gas at a more affordable rate. That is a record we can stand on, a record I am proud of and a record I hope every member of the opposition will reflect on before they vote on this bill.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity, and I thank the minister for the opportunity to serve with him to advance affordability in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Jane McKenna): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I was encouraged to hear some of the words from the Minister of Infrastructure. I have a great deal of respect for him. We have a personal friend, his uncle—something is going on between our party and theirs; we share a lot of uncles. He has his uncle up in Elliot Lake. His name is Scot Reinhardt. Him, along with myself and the mayor and council, have been working extremely hard towards a particular infrastructure project that I look forward to working with the minister on. I just wanted to give a shout-out to the community of Prince township, who effectively—I think by the end of next week—will have their full community serviced by natural gas. They just went through an entire process of connecting. Congratulations to them.

We're going to have the Ontario Mining Association here in a couple of weeks, when we return from our constituency week. They are very encouraged by what we're hearing from the minister in regard to looking at how natural gas can help the mining sector as well.

To my friend from King–Vaughan—my friend. I've got to correct you on a few things, because it sounded like you were trying to dish over some Liberal math to me here. When you say the entire province accepted what your platform was—first, you didn't have a platform. I couldn't find it anywhere on the Internet. The other thing is, do you not remember that 60% of the province did not support what you were looking at bringing forward? Because I do. They didn't buy it; they couldn't find it. So I just need to remind you of those numbers as you're coming forward.

Yes, you know what? You have a majority government based on the percentage of votes that you got, but it was only 40%. There is a large portion of the province that didn't buy into that, that wanted to have other options, that wanted to have pharmacare, that wanted to have a better savings under our hydro system. I just like reminding you of that. Don't forget the other 60% of the province that did not support this government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jane McKenna): Thank you to the member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Questions and comments? The member from Cambridge.

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: Speaker, I think this is the first time I've actually seen you in the chair, so congratulations.

I want to thank the Minister of Infrastructure, the member from King–Vaughan and, of course, the member from Algoma–Manitoulin for their responses and statements.

To the member from Algoma–Manitoulin, I will say that all I heard was “encouraged by” the news, so I'm going to go with that. This is great news. When I saw Bill 32 come through, I was very excited, because when you look at our rural areas, when we look up north, we see people that are having to use oil or electricity to heat their homes. And when we look at that electricity, we have time-of-use charges tied to their electricity usage. I think about those who are staying home, whether you're a mom or dad staying home with the kids during the day or whether you're a senior citizen staying at home because you are not working during the day and it's wintertime and you need to have your heat on. I'm thinking about these time-of-use charges and the fact that the cost of electricity is quite a lot higher than that of natural gas. It makes me happy for those who now are eligible to hopefully, if this legislation is passed, have access to natural gas to their homes.

I think of those who are using oil to heat their homes as well. I had a neighbour who did this in Mississauga, actually, many years ago, and was having to deal with the fluctuations of the oil prices and having to get that delivery shipped. Again, the convenience aspect of the natural gas is so wonderful.

So, yes, we do talk about the affordability aspect. We know that if you're switching from electricity, propane or oil to natural gas, it's saving between \$800 and \$2,500 per year. That's a lot of money. This isn't just chump change. This is a lot of money that we're seeing in savings. So this is great news.

I'm pleased to see some of the wording from the member opposite, because this will allow for better affordability for those living up north and in rural areas. It is going to make for warmer winters, for sure, for those not having to bundle up in their own homes.

Again, this is one more step that we're taking to—sorry, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jane McKenna): Thank you to the member from Cambridge.

Questions and comments? The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Well, there's one thing I know: I come from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, and it's cold in the winter, and it's remote and it's rural.

What people might not know is that we have a thriving agricultural industry around Thunder Bay as well, and the farmers are thrilled to hear that natural gas is coming their way, hopefully. But they were thrilled when we had it in our platform as well.

One thing I'd like to say is that they said it was a no-cost plan, but no, the cost will be spread among all the people who have natural gas, the existing customers. And I'm okay with that. I'm surprised the other side is, but I'm okay with that. But the problem is that we have people who think that because the bill really doesn't say “rural” or “northern,” they may be left out.

The cost of infrastructure to get gas from the main line that exists that runs through the north is very expensive,

and business often doesn't want to do what's very expensive. They have to operate on a bottom line. So how much is that going to cost?

Others are saying, "This isn't for me, because if we just leave it up to a gas company, they aren't going to spend the money that I need to get the gas down my line so that I can warm my barn," or in a town like Atikokan, where seniors heat with hydro and often they have a woodpile beside their house. One of my supporters, Fran Kolton, at 80 years old chops her own wood. So I hope that we bring natural gas to Atikokan, and I hope we bring natural gas to those who need it.

1710

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jane McKenna): Questions and comments?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: As many of my fellow colleagues have mentioned, our government promised to put the people first and foremost, to make life more affordable and much easier for families and for businesses and send a clear message that Ontario is open for business.

Instead of fear-mongering, we're going to provide hope as our government provides hope for businesses and hope to Ontarians, and that also involves things like expanding natural gas, which will ensure the benefits of natural gas are available across all of Ontario, including rural communities and the north and in my community of Barrie-Innisfil. It would ensure that we have opportunity equally spread across our province because we believe that it is the equality of opportunity, not the equality of outcome. That is what differentiates us, because we want to make sure that people have more money in their pockets to spread amongst their priorities and not the priorities of big government and big bureaucracy.

The message has been clear all across Canada. Just look at policies that are made for the people: a made-in-Manitoba policy that was just released today where the Premier there stood up against the carbon tax and said, "We are standing up for Manitobans. We're saying yes to a Manitoba green plan and no to a carbon tax." Saskatchewan is saying yes to a made-in-Saskatchewan plan.

Here in Ontario, we should also say yes to a made-in-Ontario plan that puts the people of Ontario's interests ahead, first and foremost. As the Minister of the Environment said last Monday, instead of taxing us, the federal government should be working with us to fight climate change. That's what we're doing. We're fighting for the people. We're fighting for natural gas expansion. We've made a promise to the people—promise made, promise kept.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jane McKenna): To wrap it up, the member from King-Vaughan.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I do want to start by thanking my friend from Algoma-Manitoulin, perhaps my most cherished member of the opposition; sorry to the others. Also, the member from Cambridge and the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan—I hope I got that right—and Barrie-Innisfil: Thank you all for your perspectives. It is important to hear them.

I just want to reaffirm that the driving force behind this legislation, the Access to Natural Gas Act, should it pass,

is about affordability. It is about enabling people in this province who, through no fault of their own, live in a remote, rural or First Nations community, to get access to more affordable energy.

As the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan suggested, there's real costs for folks in remote parts of this province. I accept that. I actually agree full-heartedly with what she is saying, and I am determined to ensure that more communities who right now have to pay so much are able to save a few more dollars—more affordability. If we can do that, if in one, two, three years, when we benchmark our success as a government and we're able to see more communities with access, we're able to see more affordability, more dollars in the pocketbooks of working people and taxpayers in Ontario, I would submit it is mission accomplished.

Madam Speaker, when we look at the choices before the public, two political parties have advanced higher carbon taxation, higher taxes, higher regulation—a record of literally destroying hundreds of thousands of good jobs. I think it is high time that a new government came into this province, ushered in with a mandate of affordability, with a commitment to prosperity in this province. I know that we are going to fulfill our campaign commitments, fulfill our words. That is the legacy our Premier is making of a promise made, a promise kept.

And on that note, thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jane McKenna): Thank you, the member from King-Vaughan.

Further debate? The member from Oshawa.

Applause.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and I'm glad to already have the support of all members in the House before my hour.

I appreciate being able to give the lead speech on behalf of New Democrats on this bill, and I will say that I'm very pleased to serve as our party's critic for infrastructure, transportation and highways.

I have done my best to prepare some thoughtful questions and comments to fill this hour, but in the spirit of working together—it has been unfortunate; I haven't been able to have a briefing yet on this. There are some specifics when it comes to this bill that I'm hoping the government members here today will listen to, and understand our very real, specific questions so that maybe they can be addressed at a later date.

I would also like to mention that the comments that I was glad to sit and listen to from both the minister and the parliamentary assistant—I'm going to come back to some of those comments through my speech, when we talk about a no-cost solution or that the goal of this legislation is indeed affordability or to provide that access to our remote or rural community members. That sounds great. We appreciate that as a goal. If that were the goal, we would applaud it. But when we don't see those words anywhere in this piece of legislation, then we're going to question it. When we have a piece of legislation in front of us that we're going to be debating that is going to become the law of the land, which supposedly is to extend access, as

we heard, to remote and rural communities and agricultural communities, yet the words “rural” or “agricultural” or “northern”—none of those words appear in this piece of legislation. You’re going to hear me say that a few times, Madam Speaker, and I hope that is something that can be remedied so that we can all be clear on the actual purpose.

We are discussing Bill 32, the Access to Natural Gas Act. Interestingly, although we’ve heard from the government that it’s the first 100 days, I will tell you that today, as has been confirmed by the Clerks, is actually only the 32nd sessional day. We have only been here 32 days, and it’s Bill 32. How fitting.

Mr. Michael Mantha: How can you say “only”?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: “Only”—only is relative, yes.

Expanding natural gas is critical, and we’re glad to have that conversation. We want to expand access to affordable energy. That is critical. As I said, nowhere in this bill does it clearly state that access is to be expanded to rural, remote or northern. We agree that we need affordable energy. The NDP of course supports the expansion of natural gas into rural and northern Ontario, into remote communities.

The NDP supported the \$100-million program to make it happen because we as a party, we as a broader community actually support investing in Ontario. We believe that if we’re going to say this is important, “We should expand access”—we’re actually willing to put money into that. That \$100 million was an important piece.

I’m happy to read to you from part of the NDP platform. Our platform existed in a space that was findable and accessible for Ontario, so I’m proud to share it. This section is from the Change for the Better platform.

“We will make it a priority to invest in northern and rural infrastructure. In addition to fixing schools and maintaining hospitals, this will include increasing access to reliable broadband and natural gas across Ontario to reduce dependence on high-carbon diesel and heating oil. We will invest \$100 million in natural gas expansion to rural Ontario, and create a 10-year \$1-billion fund for bringing broadband service to rural and northern Ontario. We will lobby the federal government to match it.”

I’m sharing that for a few reasons. Here we are today discussing natural gas—good. But I really look forward to when we’re in this Legislature debating broadband and access to high-speed Internet across our rural and northern communities across Ontario. Hopefully we can stay tuned for that.

We were happy to put in writing the words “rural” and “northern,” because we believe that everyone in Ontario deserves to have what they need to thrive and succeed. So again, we challenge this government, when they are taking a second look at this bill, to maybe add the words that they say matter to them, okay?

A couple of basics about the bill: This is this particular government leaving energy infrastructure to the private sector, handing over the reins, so to speak, much like the Liberals did with Hydro One. And we know how that turns out; we’re living it. Families pay more. So with this plan, bills will go up. We want expansion of access; we want that. But as we have said, we were committed to that \$100

million of government investment to say, “This matters to us. We want to see this expansion, and we’re willing to put that money in as a starting place,” and this government has actually cancelled that.

1720

I would say that these Conservatives are ignoring the urgent needs of northerners and the families and businesses in small-town and rural Ontario. I hope that they will disagree with me and that they will put it in writing in this bill to make it very clear that the goal is actually expansion to those communities and not just to suburban sprawl.

Talking a bit about natural gas—and Lord knows we have the time today—I’ve got a couple of letters and examples that I want to share. This won’t be news to anyone in this room who answers the phone or those who represent ridings that are clamouring for affordable energy.

This is the situation: There’s a woman who lives on a rural property in Stevensville, Ontario. She currently heats her home with propane, and in the winter months this costs the family approximately \$1,200 to \$1,300 every six months. This family is very low-income. These costs represent an immense financial burden on their family. Over the Christmas holiday, they actually ran out of propane and were unable to afford a new tank. They spent four days, in one of the coldest weeks of the year, without heating.

They had reached out to one of our community offices. They have natural gas lines on either side of the property, and other homes on their street have been connected to natural gas. When she spoke to Enbridge and put forward their case, it would be approximately \$30,000 to install. That’s not the kind of money that this particular family has, so that is not an option for them. Likely, they never will, which again brings us to why we’re having this important debate: When people can’t afford to even get into the system to be able to benefit from it and are stuck paying exorbitant rates, well, that’s why we need to have affordable access to our rural, remote and northern communities.

Part of the response to this particular individual situation—I’m going to read from a letter from Enbridge in response to their request:

“At the time of our last feasibility study a customer contribution in the amount of \$30,664.00 was required. A new feasibility and pressure analysis will need to be conducted in order to determine the cost” to bring gas to this particular address.

“In this case, the revenue over the life of the project is less than the project cost so a contribution in aid of construction is required.” It goes on with the numbers: “In the absence of charging a customer contribution the utility would collect less revenue than necessary to fund the project. The deficiency in revenues would then have to be recovered from other customers, essentially increasing the rates for other customers.”

So basically they say, “We can visit this again, but sorry.”

That's a very familiar letter for farms, for families, for communities in areas where they just don't have the access that they want so badly to have, because everybody needs and deserves access to affordable energy.

Another letter that I'm happy to share:

"North of Earlton on Highway 11 there is a cluster of businesses that have been trying to get natural gas for the past five years." This is in the Timiskaming-Cochrane area. "There is Earlton RV centre, Brownlee Equipment, Schill farms ... Dionne Concrete and a satellite facility for the particleboard plant at Englehart that is owned by Georgia-Pacific." They would all be major consumers of natural gas, and they are willing to sign on if the access is provided. "The cost has been unbelievably high for them because it would need to be brought about one and [a] half miles north from Earlton." That's the last gas line outlet.

Many of us in our—well, I have never actually advocated for this. In my riding of Oshawa, I haven't received a letter like this, which is why I'm drawing from the experience of our northern and rural members. This is not unusual, that you hear from communities and you hear from businesses that say, "Can you advocate for us? Can you help us have access to affordable energy?"

Again, here's a letter in response to this particular community. This was in response to some advocacy from the office of the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane.

"Union Gas Ltd. is always looking for expansion opportunities and we appreciate your inquiry of a natural gas expansion to this industrial area north of Earlton on Highway 11.

"Union Gas has completed a review of this area and the results of the preliminary economic study showed a one-time financial contribution in excess of \$208,495 to make this project feasible."

Massive, right? These are unbelievable costs to get into the game of affordable energy.

They note that "Union Gas remains committed to expansion projects that meet the required OEB economic criteria and will continue to monitor growth and other factors in this area that will improve the economics."

So I'm giving a little bit of background for the folks at home, or for some of the suburban folks like myself. This is not something that our office deals with on a regular basis. But if I were to ask the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, who has been nodding at me, this is par for the course.

Again, I wish that this bill used the word "northern." I wish that, in this bill, we could find the word—

Mr. Michael Mantha: Or "Indigenous communities."

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I wish that we could find anything to reference our Indigenous communities, northern communities or rural communities. It's not there—again, a challenge to the government to remedy that, perhaps in committee.

One more community that I'm happy to get on the record: Latchford, again in the Timiskaming area. The small town of Latchford is located on Highway 11, just south of the city of Temiskaming Shores. They went through the application process for access that was offered

in 2017, and they were denied. This is a community with many seniors and individuals on fixed incomes, so the natural gas would be an asset to them. It would help in terms of affordability, but it would have quite an economic impact on the broader community.

There was an article in the local paper at the time from June 2017 referencing their application, because this is a community project. The community had submitted their application for part of that Liberal-promised \$100-million grant. They wanted that project, and they were quite optimistic. I'll read from this:

"The town of Latchford has submitted an application to the provincial government's Natural Gas Grant Program in an effort to bring natural gas to town.

"The application to the Ontario Ministry of Infrastructure is being made in a partnership with Union Gas, and if successful, will proceed to the Ontario Energy Board for approval....

"The town believes access to natural gas will provide more affordable and reliable energy for residents and businesses in the town...."

I'm not going to belabour this point. I think I've made it and I think we've heard it. I know that, as the debate continues, we're going to hear other local, family and agricultural examples of people clamouring for affordable energy. Certainly, any member in this House who has sat across from a delegation at AMO or ROMA has heard this. They've heard about broadband access or high-speed Internet access. They're heard about the need for affordable energy. This is something that we hear on a regular basis: that industry, in order to thrive, needs, first of all, a predictable environment, but it needs to be able to have that affordable energy and high-speed Internet.

Yesterday, I think we all met with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. We all met with delegations. That was something that, again, I heard repeated and definitely stressed, that for any business not just to thrive or to grow but to actually come and invest and establish themselves, they need at least those two things: access to high-speed Internet and affordable energy. But our farms and agriculture industry need to be competitive. They also, I would say, need to be online—again, back to the broadband. I'm going to get that in there everywhere I can, because I'm really hoping that that will encourage the government to maybe table a bill about that. If it's not already in the works, maybe they should get one started.

I also met with an individual from the OFA yesterday, a turkey farmer who talked about the fact that in one year—because his farm actually does have access to natural gas—they saved \$30,000 over what their neighbours paid with propane. That was in one year. He said, "What I do as a farmer, what I do as a community member when I have that kind of savings is, I spend it in my community. I reinvest it. That money goes back in." We all understand why people need affordable energy, but I asked him, as well, how he got into that system, how he tapped into the natural gas lines. He said it was 22 years ago, and of course, they had to pay to get connected. Do you know what the cost was back then, 22 years ago, Speaker? He said it was \$80,000—\$80,000—

22 years ago to get in on that system. Imagine then; I don't know what it would be now.

1730

Let's come back to what is in this bill. This is a bill that the government has talked about as being a no-cost solution. This is a program that—the government is talking about saving the taxpayers. It isn't a no-cost solution. It does have a cost, and that cost needs to be borne by somebody.

Maybe Enbridge or Union Gas or some of these companies will get in touch with me and let me know if I'm wrong, but I don't think they're just in this business to make life better for folks. I believe they probably want to make some money. So for them to put these lines in and expand natural gas—they're not doing it for free. They're not doing it without the potential to make money. They're businesses.

So it is not a no-cost solution. The cost will be borne. There is a cost. Where is it going to come from? The government has said over and over that it's not coming from the taxpayer. Well, it is coming from somewhere, and it's coming from the existing ratepayer base. The ratepayer might not be wearing the label that day that says "taxpayer." They're not reaching into their taxpayer pocket; they're reaching into their ratepayer pocket. But the cost is going to be borne by someone, and they're actually real people, but we're going to call them ratepayers, the existing ratepayer base.

There's going to be rate protection, though, for some consumers. As I have already outlined and as members already know, it is a massive cost to get into the natural gas system if you don't live directly on a line. We've talked about the \$30,000 cost to tap into the line. This is a workaround for that, so that they don't have to pay that. There is going to be rate protection for some consumers so that it can be expanded to areas where up to this point it wouldn't be able to, with certain other consumers covering the additional cost to expand. So the companies are going to recoup the costs to expand on the backs of certain consumers—I'll come back to "certain," because your guess is as good as mine, Speaker, who "certain" consumers are. That will be explained in regulation. We'll look forward to that. We're assuming it's the existing ratepayer base—I don't know if it's all of them or if it will be a geographic region or not other geographic regions. We'll look forward to getting that clarification, hopefully. Cabinet can choose who will be entitled to the relief and who will fund the expansion. That's in the bill. Cabinet can prescribe criteria for what is a qualifying investment—so for the formulas and calculations. In terms of the merits of a project, it does say here that cabinet can prescribe criteria.

Interjections.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm easily distracted, Speaker. It's the teacher in me. I'm going to continue.

Compensation for natural gas distributors will be determined by regulation. Does that compensation actually equal the lost revenue? Maybe. I don't know.

Cabinet can also mandate that certain information be included with the invoices.

Speaker, I'm going to take you back in time a little bit, to the session before this. You might recall that the Liberal government of the day had put, arguably, partisan advertising in their hydro bills. We debated that in this Legislature with the Fair Hydro Act and the advertising on the bills. Well, here we have a government initiative, and in this bill it says that cabinet can mandate that certain information be included in those invoices. So I'm really looking forward to seeing what that shiny information is going to look like to further sell this initiative to the ratepayers. We'll be paying it, even though we've heard it's a no-cost solution. Okay.

How am I doing for time? Still going; oh, good.

Mr. Bill Walker: Forty minutes, and I'm not leaving.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm just getting warmed up. Actually, Speaker, this is not my first rodeo when it comes to one-hour leads. Some of you may recall that when I was new to this Legislature, I was the critic for pensions, and the Liberals, you may recall, introduced the ORPP. That was in three parts so I had three one-hour leads, and then the bill on PRPP—I had four one-hour leads. And then they all went through committee—because that used to happen—and then I had four more one-hour leads. So I quite literally had eight hours on pensions. And you know what? You can never talk enough about pensions. But here we have natural gas.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Except we don't have one, but other than that.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I hear the Minister of Finance lamenting the fact that we don't have pensions. We're glad to have that on the record. Thanks.

Speaker, I'd like to take us back in time a little bit here. When it comes to our history with natural gas, I've had to learn this all by myself because, like I said, I've asked for a briefing from the ministry and I still haven't had it on this particular bill. So I've had to delve and I've had to figure out how we got to this point. Before the 2014 election—that was before my time—the Liberals had promised \$230 million to expand natural gas infrastructure to rural areas. That was \$200 million in loans and then \$30 million in grants. By 2017, do you know how much of that they had disbursed? Nothing.

So nothing had been disbursed. They announced the program was actually going to be changed and reduced to a single \$100-million grant program: no loans, just \$100 million in grants to expand to rural areas. Speaker, the NDP supported the \$100-million expansion program. We want to strengthen the rural economy. We were willing to put money into that—skin in the game, so to speak—because we wanted to reduce the dependence on high-carbon diesel and heating oil, to connect biofuel production on farms to the natural gas grid—all sorts of things. But we wanted to work with and for rural and northern communities in support of that \$100-million expansion grant.

The PC government has cut that \$100-million grant and they are touting this as a \$100-million savings. Okay? So there was \$100 million on the table that the Liberals had promised. The PCs are cutting that and they are saying, "We are saving the taxpayer \$100 million." Okay, so \$100

million in savings, except that that is not exactly how I would sell it. I would sell it as, “Hey, we’re not willing to put any money into this—no taxpayers’ dollars folks,” and they have a party. But the entire cost is going to be borne by those same taxpayers, and we’re going to call them ratepayers.

Interjection.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I’m not going to bite.

But this is another interesting thing in terms of fun word games. The PCs are promising to expand rural natural gas infrastructure “by enabling private sector participation....” I’m going to say that again: “by enabling private sector participation....” That doesn’t even make sense, because nearly 100% of all natural gas in Ontario is delivered by a single private monopoly. You cannot have any more private sector participation than 100%.

1740

Do you know what it reminds me of? Speaker, again, you might remember this: sitting across from the then Liberal government, who talked about broadening the ownership of Hydro One. That never made sense to me, because you can’t get any broader than every single Ontarian. We literally had every Ontarian as an owner of Hydro One, and then the government said, “We’re going to broaden that ownership.” No, they didn’t. So it’s the same thing here. We’re going to enable private sector participation. They’re already 100% participating. That’s fine. Word games, and it sounds good.

So Speaker—

Mr. Michael Mantha: She’s right, eh, John?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I’m left.

Cutting the \$100-million fund for gas expansion is an interesting way—and we talked about it in this House—to talk about investing in our rural or northern communities. When you have \$100 million that was committed and promised for many years—and I can go back through committee notes. It’s very interesting to read some of the folks in this Legislature on record for so long, and we’re still having the same conversation: “Folks need affordable energy. Let’s do this”—but \$100 million to invest. The government says, “This matters to us. We’re putting money in”—and then go ahead and come up with a further-to-that expansion project. But it gives us some kind of connection, it gives us some kind of responsibility. Instead, this is like, “Ha ha. Let’s say we’re doing it. Don’t put any in. All of the onus of responsibility will be borne by the private companies, and then if something goes wrong, we could say that we didn’t do it right.”

Anyway, I am happy to read—where is it? “Review of Ford Government’s Gas Delivery System Expansion Legislation, Bill 32.” This is an article from Tom Adams, an energy consultant who used to actually advise the PCs—fun fact. I’m going to read directly from an article on September 19:

“With this legislation, the Ford government is taking over one of the key functions of the OEB—overseeing gas system expansion....

“Regulating gas system expansion necessarily involves trade-offs between the interests of existing customers

versus the interest of prospective customers beyond the fringe of existing gas delivery networks. The OEB has performed reasonably well in this role over many decades. Cross-subsidies between existing and new customers was permitted but kept to a dull roar. Expansion was orderly and carefully planned.

“Politicizing gas system expansion will directly result in higher overall costs, but I believe the indirect costs could be greater than the direct costs.

“This legislation is the equivalent of a notwithstanding clause hanging over the head of the OEB undermining its authority. While the legislation says that utilities will be insulated from the costs of uneconomic expansion, politics cuts both ways. A future government might grow concerned about rising gas delivery costs and simply order utilities to suck up the extra charges.

“All this creates risk for utilities and customers.

The Wynne government had a program whereby taxpayers subsidized uneconomic gas expansion on a one-off \$100-million basis.... Why should taxpayers subsidize energy services? Compared to all of her government’s other energy policies, her gas expansion policy was the least harmful—contained costs and some benefits. Ford would have been far better off to simply continue her program.

“Wynne’s approach to gas expansion looks temperate and well-considered compared to Ford’s approach.”

That was an interesting article from an energy consultant who used to advise the PCs. We don’t agree with his comments on the \$100 million. We really do believe that if you’re going to say that something matters to you as a government, you should be willing to invest in it. So the \$100 million, we supported.

It was very interesting that this government, right out of the gate, pulled funding for those natural gas projects. We’ve talked about this. North Bay, for example: When they cancelled the \$100-million grant program to expand gas into rural Ontario, there was a project on the table that the community of North Bay was—well, now what happens to the project? I know that the Minister of Finance, when I asked him about this in the House, said that I was irresponsible for asking. But I think that what is irresponsible is that lack of predictability of communication and trust. I think that uncertainty when it comes to communities and businesses—if we’re going to call each other irresponsible, I’d put that one on the table.

I’m happy to read from this article, also September 19: “Province Pulls Funding for Natural Gas Project.”

“The province is pulling millions of dollars in funding for a previously approved project to extend natural gas services to the North Shore and Peninsula Roads area.

“Coun. Tanya Vrebosch says word that the project funding—more than \$8.6 million—has been cancelled reached the city Wednesday.

“The move comes a day after Premier Doug Ford announced the province is introducing legislation to develop a new natural gas program aimed at expanding access throughout rural and northern Ontario....

“We were blindsided with this today. We’ve been given no information and we’re left with all these questions....”

“To me, they need to honour what was approved.” And you know what? Maybe they will. But there’s the uncertainty. I don’t know if this will still be playing out. I have every faith that the member who represents them has their best interests at heart, but when we’re talking about cancelling programs that communities understand and were a part of, then you have that uncertainty.

I hope that all of these communities still have access or will have access, but I think the wrong way to go about it is for the government to have no skin in this game. I think that’s a problem.

When it comes to northern and rural and agricultural communities, they should get a mention in the bill. They are getting a lot of attention during debate so far. So far, so good. Talk is great. Let’s put it in the bill. Let’s actually say, “Okay, we mean it.”

But it was interesting, because while we’ve been talking about the OFA—and I’ve got a bunch of quotes that I can also read from their submission to pre-budget consultations. These are groups that have been advocating for years for their communities, their farms, their agribusiness, their industries to have access to affordable energy. It’s interesting that when this announcement was made, it was the Ontario Home Builders’ Association that was at the announcement. It wasn’t, for example, the OFA. I know that they have put out a statement. Everyone has opinions on this, and that’s good. We should have lots of discussion. But I wonder why it was the home builders there if we’re talking about the goal for this to be for rural, northern and agricultural communities and development. We want to see development happen in this province, Speaker. We need to have affordable housing. We want to see responsible development happen, but as I said, we want that to be responsible.

Is this program going to be a big subsidy program to provide services to new tract housing? Because that’s a pretty expensive incentive. If the goal of this is to expand service to the areas that have been needing it, our rural and northern communities, then let’s have that conversation all day, every day. If this is strictly going to be a big subsidy program for new tract housing, then brand it as such. I think we need to have that conversation.

There’s a bigger issue here, Speaker, and that is that this is a pretty big lever. The government can authorize the Ontario Energy Board, or the OEB, to allow a private company to reach into the pockets of ratepayers. That’s what’s happening, and that’s a big lever to pull. There is a monopoly in Ontario when it comes to natural gas distribution. They have about 99% of the distribution. If the OEB isn’t scrutinizing the benefits or doing a cost-benefit analysis, we are going to have quite a situation that ratepayers will be on the hook for.

You know what? This government may want to clarify. They might want to challenge what I just said and reassure us: “Don’t worry. The OEB is going to be totally involved and is going to scrutinize these. They’re going to continue

to have that kind of authority, because we do indeed want these decisions made responsibly and really looking at the cost benefit breakdown.” Again, we don’t want to hamper growth, we don’t want to hamper access, but if we give it to everybody, if we run lines all over the place willy-nilly and we don’t have any kind of oversight or say, “What will that cost and who will pay for it?” that’s a question and it’s a fair question. I hope that that is one that will be addressed.

I’ve said it before, but this concept of saving the taxpayer versus saving the ratepayer—it’s the same person, wearing a different T-shirt. It’s a different bumper sticker, I guess—I don’t know. But people who are going to be on the hook for covering the cost will see that on their bills. They are maybe not taxpayers; they’re ratepayers. They are people too, and we respect them. We respect their money. We respect their pocketbooks.

1750

We had a \$100-million fund to mitigate the costs of expansion programs; now we don’t. But here’s an interesting bit of quick math. Again, I know the Conservatives love to talk in mathy bits, so help me to do this math. The Minister of Infrastructure—

Interjection.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Not you—them. I don’t need your help.

The Minister of Infrastructure said in this House that the \$100 million would cover 12 projects and that with this new plan we can expand to about 80 communities. Again, really quick math: If \$100 million gets us 12, then 80 would need about, what, \$700 million, give or take? So is that cost going to be borne by ratepayers? Is that a fair way to come to \$700 million? What will that look like on the bills?

As I said, left to regulation, the cabinet gets to decide who will cover the cost, who will have the subsidy, and what that will look like. So is this all existing ratepayers across the province or is it going to be a geographic chunk that will bear that cost? I don’t know; neither do you. We will just stay tuned.

Another thing: Speaker, you’ve been in this House a while and you’ve probably been a part of conversations about green energy, green innovations, and between the Liberals and Conservatives, really, they’ve made “green” sound like a dirty word. But what was dirty was the way the last government’s willy-nilly approval process to the contracts that channelled money into private contracts without doing homework—that’s a problem and we don’t want to see that continue, regardless of who is at the helm. We’re all paying for it. We’re going to be paying for it for a long time. We know that. It doesn’t mean that there isn’t room for innovation or green technologies, but the last government committed money without doing the math.

But now, here we have a slightly different situation but still worth mentioning: This government isn’t committing any money. They don’t seem compelled to do the math. They’re not paying for it with tax dollars—remember, ratepayers, not taxpayers—just from the taxpayer’s other pocket, labelled “ratepayer.” But this opens up the door to

the natural gas sector: “Whatever it takes. You make the decisions. Go ahead.” Does this sound familiar? Yes. Yes, it does. We’ve seen this: “Whatever the cost, no problem.” We had this with the last government that made decisions like some of the solar energy contracts: first out of the gate; pay top dollar; lock us in. Somebody should have been doing the math.

The thing is, I don’t think that we should be rushing into something without doing the math, so I want reassurances from this government—maybe at committee or maybe during debate—where they can explain to us how they’re going to ensure that it won’t be willy-nilly. What will be OEB’s role look like in this? Will they be able to scrutinize these projects? Will we all be able to be rest assured that there is going to be a ceiling to that cost that will be borne by the ratepayers? Who will the ratepayers be, and for how long? If my project is subsidized but everyone else is paying for it, at what point do I become the consumer that then has to subsidize the next town or the next project? These are conversations that are fair. Everyone wants access to affordable energy, so let’s have the conversation about what that “affordable” will look like.

But again, we have a situation where potentially this government says, “Don’t worry. These expansion costs won’t be on our books. Ratepayers will look after it, so do whatever.” It’s interesting that Smitherman gave the same assurances. “It will only be \$1,” that kind of thing. But flash forward: That’s not what happened. That isn’t what we have had to pay.

Speaker, I ask a fair question: Why should we trust any minister or ministry directive when there is no government ministry money, no investment, no skin in the game? This is enabling legislation, but with zero money in from the government. Again, very clearly, I’m asking: What will the OEB’s role be? Stay tuned, Speaker. It will be in regulations.

What is clear is that this Conservative government is giving a private company potentially unfettered access to people’s pockets. If they want to argue that, I want them to argue that. I want them to come back at us and say, “No, no, no. You’ve got it all wrong. This is actually what’s going to happen. In fact, we’re willing to put that in at committee stage and make those changes to reassure Ontarians that there’s going to that kind of authority, that kind of scrutiny, that kind of power retained by the OEB. And you know what? You’re right: How on earth could we have omitted the word ‘northern,’ the word ‘rural’? How could we have omitted reference to our First Nations and Indigenous communities?”

I hope they challenge that, that they come back and—I’m looking at the clock. My goodness, where has the time gone? I still have lots of time, but partly for another day. I’m going to get a few more bits in here in the next couple of minutes.

The Ontario Energy Board, or OEB, has a duty to respect the consumer. They have two core principles, basically, to determine if it’s worth it or not to go into a community to lay the gas lines. First of all, one, you can’t

charge different amounts to different classes of consumers; and two, you can’t expand if it doesn’t benefit the existing consumers.

Back in 2016, the Liberals decided that rule number one, that first one, wasn’t fair, that if a community or family is willing to pay the difference, like in some of our remote and northern regions, if they are willing to pay for it, they deserve to have it. We’ll make that exception. If they’re willing to pay more, then, case by case, we can override that principle. But here—the government is supposed to reflect public interest and energy policy—this bill overturns the other rule, which says that you can’t expand it if it doesn’t benefit the existing consumer base. So they’re overriding that. As I said, will the OEB be able to scrutinize? What will that role be? How do we ensure that there’s a benefit maintained and what that will look like?

Speaker, I am going to conclude—no, I’m not concluding. I’m going to wind down because I still have time on the clock for another day.

Interjection.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I’m not going to use gas puns. Stop asking. I’m being encouraged by my colleague, and he doesn’t—

Mr. Mike Harris: Don’t sabotage your own colleague.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: No, no. Never sabotage me.

Speaker, I hope everybody comes back, at the next opportunity to debate this bill, to hang on every word that I’m going to say about fair and responsible natural gas expansion. And maybe, when we have the chance to do questions and comments after my remarks the next time we come back, hopefully they will have some of those answers for me, to reassure not just the NDP but all Ontarians that they are approaching this in the best, most responsible way possible.

Thank you, Speaker, until another day.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would like to thank the member. You will have time. The next time this bill is brought forward in the Legislature, you will have some time left to continue your debate.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member for Kitchener Centre has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister, or the parliamentary assistant, in this case, may reply for up to five minutes.

I now turn it over to the member from Kitchener Centre for her five minutes, please.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Although it's been a while since the question was posed, I don't think the impact has decreased in any way, shape or form. As a quick reminder, I had stood right here in the House and I asked a sincere question to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. I asked, in his capacity as the person overseeing the Anti-Racism Directorate, if he would denounce Faith Goldy and denounce Faith Goldy's use of the Premier and slogans that the Premier has been known for in her mayoral campaign.

1800

My request was sincere, and I would argue that every time I've stood up in the House, I have done my best to talk about some pretty challenging things from a very—I would say—loving place. However, instead of responding to my question, I was accused of playing “political games” and trying to score political points. Those were the words that were used within the reply.

Unfortunately, it left me having to think about something very serious. I am the critic for anti-racism, and I am the critic for citizenship and immigration. Both of those portfolios are going to require that, somehow, I speak across party lines about racism and about the impact of racism in this world. If every time I speak about racism, the response is, “That's a political game,” or that I'm trying to score political points, I actually can't do my job.

What I wanted to do was to take just a minute to explain what I had already done prior to asking that question. Prior to asking that question, I walked across the floor, after the late show that had happened, and spoke to some of my colleagues in government about this very thing. I reached out to the minister. I've sent a letter—I've gotten no reply—requesting a meeting to sit down and speak about how we can better serve our communities by addressing racism in the community. And I've taken some time to literally just stop and breathe while I've watched the government refuse to distance themselves from Faith Goldy and the hateful views that she holds.

I've decided that I've got this opportunity to take the next two minutes to do what I would like to call a crash course in anti-racism. It starts off with this: We are in a leadership position in this House. We've been told that it's an honourable position to be here. What that means is that we cannot take these discussions personally. The only reason why somebody would accuse me, asking a question about racism, of playing a political game is if they feel attacked. But we can't do that. We actually have to be bigger than that.

What we're talking about and what I'm asking about is for everyone to take seriously the ways that us, in this role—creating legislation, passing bills—are impacting the day-to-day reality of racialized people all the time. So we have to be self-reflective. We have to think about what that impact is.

That brings me to my other point: People in the world are going to be angry; regular people will be angry about the impact of the bills that we agree to here and the bills that we pass, and they have every right to that anger, because there are going to be moments when we miss

things. So we can't approach them and accuse them of playing political games; we have to speak across these boundaries and actually listen.

In conclusion, what I want—honestly, those two things are all you need to know for anti-racism work: Be open and don't take it personally; recognize your place and recognize that other people have real, big feelings about that. The statement saying that we believe in anti-racism and that we support all sorts of different people is totally fine to say out loud, and it makes us feel great in our heart, but our job is bigger than that. Our job is to act in a way that will not harm people. We have to decrease the harm, and that means that when somebody points out that something is harmful, we have to stop, think about it and act in a different way to do better. So I'm hoping that this debate will be an actual discussion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank the member from Kitchener Centre.

I now turn it over to the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to respond to the points made by the member from Kitchener Centre.

Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: First, I just want to start by—I really wish the members opposite would really listen to what we've been saying and what we've been talking about. Our caucus, our entire team, the entire PC caucus, unequivocally condemns any and all forms of hate, racism, bigotry. Just look at our team. Look how diverse our team is. Look how strong our team is.

I don't get this rhetoric from the other side constantly accusing us, our government, of being intolerant. That is absolutely not the case. Our team, unanimously, every single member of this caucus denounces that, and let's be clear, the Premier has been clear on this. It doesn't matter. There's no room for hate speech, no room for being anti-Semitic. Any form of racism, whether it's from Faith Goldy or any individual—there's no room for that.

Mr. Speaker, I really want to talk about my story and my parents' story. They immigrated here. My father left everything he had to immigrate to the greatest country in the world, Canada, and gave us this opportunity. This country is founded on these principles of multiculturalism and diversity. My father worked hard. He faced many challenges. He faced discrimination through his life when he was struggling at being an entrepreneur.

I remember my mom working jobs in a factory lifting boxes, taking overtime shifts just so that my family—my brothers and sisters—could really get every opportunity possible. And this country is so great because if you work hard, if you have a dream, anything is possible.

I also want to take an opportunity to really speak about—I know the issue at hand resulted from a picture taken at Ford Fest, but I really wish the members opposite could take an opportunity to come to Ford Fest, because Ford Fest is probably one of the best examples of how diverse, how beautiful, this country is, where people from all walks of life, all faith groups—over 7,000 people. It took me almost an hour and a half to park my car that day at Ford Fest. It was absolutely incredible to see so many

people from all backgrounds, races, religions, cultures, coming together and celebrating what Canada really is.

I think the members opposite should take an opportunity next year. Come to Ford Fest and see what Ford Nation is really about and what this PC Party is really about. It adds to the inclusive nature of this.

Once again, I just want to reiterate the fact that our caucus has denounced all forms of hate of race and religion. Our mandate as a government is to govern for the people of Ontario regardless of your race, regardless of your religion. There is no room for hate or bigotry or intolerance. Ontarians know that racism is counterproductive. Racism is detrimental to the success of this province. That's why our government has implemented a proactive approach to address this problem. We are engaging and collaborating with a variety of ministries on the Anti-Racism Directorate. Our mission here is to facilitate the eradication of the discriminatory burdens that plague marginalized communities.

Our government has zero tolerance for bigotry and hate—zero. Mr. Speaker, we want to work with all levels of government, all of our ministries, to ensure that for any systemic barriers that do exist, we can tackle those and make sure that everybody has a fair and just opportunity in this great province. We're acting on this: The Anti-Racism Directorate is a platform to conduct research and craft policies to combat the presence of discrimination in our province. Moving forward, our government continues to explore new avenues to achieve this goal.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Ottawa South has given notice of dissatisfaction to a response given by the Premier. The member from Ottawa South will have up to five minutes to make his case and the Premier or the parliamentary assistant to the Premier will have up to five minutes in response.

I now turn it over to the member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: This is the first time I've ever requested a late show, and I take no pleasure in doing so. I hoped that the Premier would disassociate himself and the office he holds from Faith Goldy and what she stands for: hate and intolerance; that some people deserve to live here in Ontario and others don't; that some people are worth more than others. I was stunned that the Premier could not say the words, "I do not associate myself with Faith Goldy. I do not stand shoulder to shoulder with her, and I do not endorse her campaign."

1810

There was an opportunity for the Premier to say those words tonight. I hope that the member who is speaking on his behalf will bring those words. Those words should come from his mouth, here in the people's place. In any event, if the member opposite is bringing those words, they'll be recorded here today.

The Premier knew who Faith Goldy was when he posed for that photo. He knows she propagates views of intolerance and hate and that those views are of deep concern to Ontarians. She has used that picture and her relationship with the Premier as a de facto endorsement of her campaign, in fact communicating with voters that she stands shoulder to shoulder with the Premier. That should be enough for the Premier to say that he does not endorse her views, endorse her campaign, that he disassociates himself with her and ask her publicly to stop using him as an endorsement. It's that simple.

Here are some of the things that Faith Goldy has to say: She believes in the white genocide conspiracy theory and fears "white people are being replaced." She has appeared on podcasts with notorious white supremacists. She has recited the white supremacist 14 words trope. She believes the 2016 shooting in the Quebec mosque was a Muslim conspiracy. She has favourably quoted the work of a Romanian fascist who called for the elimination of the Jewish race. That is very disturbing.

When you look at the recent record of this government—diminishing and disbanding the Anti-Racism Directorate; cancelling the new curriculum as it relates to Indigenous peoples and truth and reconciliation; repealing the sex education curriculum that deals with tolerance, inclusion and respect; and threatening to invoke the "notwithstanding" clause, thereby diminishing our Charter of Rights—it begs some questions.

Most recently, I picked up a tweet from September 22 from Faith Goldy and the header says, "Faith Nation IS Ford Nation." Underneath it says, "More Muslims=More Violence." And underneath that it says, "An oldie but a goodie, just as true now as ever."

The Premier is not only an individual; he has a duty to the office that he holds. That's why he must say the words that people are asking him to say in the people's place.

I do not know what's in the Premier's heart. I don't know what's in his head. What I do know is that many Ontarians are deeply concerned and that he needs to say those words clearly and unequivocally. Whether it's in question period or that opportunity that's here tonight, those words need to be said.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank the member from Ottawa South. Now the parliamentary assistant to the Premier has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member from Ottawa South for his remarks and also the member from Kitchener Centre for hers and for our chat that day that she spoke.

Mr. Speaker, I have stood in this Legislature before, alongside my colleagues, to speak out against hatred in this province. I have said in the past that there is no place for intolerance and bigotry in this province or in this country.

Our Premier has been a strong voice in denouncing hatred and racism in any form, including from Faith Goldy or anyone who harbours xenophobia, intolerance, hate and vitriol. I want to say with absolute clarity and with moral

certitude that we denounce it, that we oppose it, and that this government—I'd argue all members of this Legislature—will stand up against it.

This government understands that discrimination is a harsh reality for too many Ontarians. It is a harsh reality that calls for swift action by this government. The people of Ontario understand that the presence of anti-Semitism and intolerance is detrimental to our province.

Mr. Speaker, if I could reflect on my short time on this earth, I'm proud of my days on campus denouncing the BDS movement and actions to isolate Jews on campus in this country. I'm proud in my short time that when a trustee in York region used repugnant and disgusting words about a resident—this was while I was a nominated candidate—I called for her resignation. I'm proud that when the former federal government was looking at historical remembrance of wrongdoings that had taken place over the course of the history of our nation, that we called for remembering the internment of Canadians during the Second World War.

All of us in this Legislature oppose this intolerance with absolute, absolute clarity. These hurdles are not only unnecessary, but they also are immoral and they are wrong. Ontarians understand this; this government understands this. That is why the entire Progressive Conservative caucus stands behind this message. Contrary to what the member from Ottawa South suggested about the Anti-Racism Directorate, it is why our government has pledged its commitment to working with the Anti-Racism Directorate that provides a platform to respond to discriminatory hurdles so many Ontarians face.

This platform will serve as a key tool to addressing racism head-on. We will create the most appropriate policies to ensure that every single Ontarian could achieve their full potential unimpeded by racism and hate in this province. Our government was elected to serve every individual in this province, every single one, those who voted for us and those who did not. We take that responsibility seriously. We will defend those who are subject to anti-Semitic and racial attacks, attacks on new Canadians, attacks on the LGBT community, on religious and ethnic minorities—on every single one of them.

I will not allow that to take place in this Legislature, as a member from the riding of King–Vaughan, and all of us,

every single one of us, will oppose it. That is our duty in this Legislature. It is the people's chamber. The one thing I agree with the member from Ottawa South on is that it is the people's chamber. They deserve to have a government and members on all sides who will reject that vitriol categorically and absolutely.

Our Premier has been unequivocal in his statements of denouncement of hate. Our Premier expressed a genuine enthusiasm in serving the people of this great province, all people. This was exemplified over the course of tons of events, many events from Ford Fest and onwards, where he has gone to meet with people from all walks of life—racial, ethnic, religious, it does not matter. He is very interested, authentically, in meeting them and understanding their aspirations as Ontarians and as taxpayers.

I'm deeply proud that the mandate of this government has resonated with so many across the province. The diverse and unprecedented turnout that I observed firsthand in the city of Vaughan at Ford Fest suggests that we are taking steps in the right direction to enfranchise more people to get involved in politics. The diversity in that audience is not a talking point; it is a reality for our movement. There are people from every single walk of life, different incomes, ages, heritage and faith, who came voluntarily—7,000, to be precise—to show up and participate in our democracy. That is a good thing, Mr. Speaker.

Any actions fuelled by hatred and bigotry are acts of aggression that bring this province backward. That is why I and our entire team denounce the presence of anti-Semitism and racism in our province. It is why we have been clear about this from day one. Any incident that is fuelled by these discriminatory motives is deplorable, and it is wrong. We will never endorse those words or actions motivated by hate. I encourage all members of this Legislature to work collaboratively to eradicate discriminatory barriers in every region of our province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I appreciate the comments made by all members in the Legislature.

There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to have been carried. Therefore, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1819.

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Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
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Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
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Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
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Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
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McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
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Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	

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Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
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Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
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Singh, Gurattan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
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Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
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Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
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Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
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
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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
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Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts

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Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Wayne Gates
Stan Cho, Jill Dunlop
John Fraser, Wayne Gates
Stephen Lecce, Gila Martow
Jane McKenna, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Lindsey Park, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Timothy Bryan

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Stephen Crawford
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
Ian Arthur, Stan Cho
Stephen Crawford, Doug Downey
Sol Mamakwa, David Piccini
Jeremy Roberts, Sandy Shaw
Donna Skelly
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Timothy Bryan

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Dave Smith
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Jessica Bell, Lorne Coe
Chris Glover, Christine Hogarth
Logan Kanapathi, Daryl Kramp
Natalia Kusendova, Amarjot Sandhu
Mike Schreiner, Dave Smith
Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Roman Baber, Rudy Cuzzetto
Amy Fee, Vincent Ke
Andrea Khanjin, Marie-France Lalonde
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Jeremy Roberts, Marit Stiles
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Parm Gill
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Roman Baber, Aris Babikian
Nathalie Des Rosiers, Jill Dunlop
Parm Gill, Lindsey Park
Ross Romano, Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria
Sara Singh, Monique Taylor
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam
Robert Bailey, Rima Berns-McGown
Michael Coteau, Mike Harris
Faisal Hassan, Jane McKenna
Christina Maria Mitas, Sam Oosterhoff
Amanda Simard, Gurratan Singh
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Peggy Sattler
Catherine Fife, Goldie Ghamari
Jim McDonnell, Norman Miller
Suze Morrison, Michael Parsa
Peggy Sattler, Kinga Surma
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Randy Hillier
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kaleed Rasheed
Toby Barrett, Will Bouma
Mike Harris, Randy Hillier
Mitzie Hunter, Laura Mae Lindo
Paul Miller, Billy Pang
Kaleed Rasheed, Amarjot Sandhu
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Présidente: Nina Tangri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Deepak Anand
Deepak Anand, Doly Begum
Jeff Burch, Amy Fee
Michael Gravelle, Joel Harden
Belinda Karahalios, Robin Martin
Sheref Sabawy, Nina Tangri
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Select Committee on Financial Transparency / Comité spécial
sur la transparence financière**

Chair / Président: Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Doug Downey
Roman Baber, Doug Downey
Catherine Fife, Robin Martin
Lindsey Park, Ross Romano
Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria, Sandy Shaw
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim