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Jeudi
13 septembre 2018

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Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 13 September 2018

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 13 septembre 2018

The House met at 0900.

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

NOTICES OF REASONED
AMENDMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 71(b), both the member for Hamilton Centre and the member for Guelph have notified the Clerk of their intention to file notice of a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 31, An Act to amend the City of Toronto Act, 2006, the Municipal Act, 2001, the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 and the Education Act and to revoke two regulations. The order for second reading of Bill 31 may therefore not be called today.

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 12, 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 Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Niagara Centre.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Good morning, Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to this bill—which, as you heard yesterday from my colleagues, has been mischaracterized by the government as a tax. There is a carbon tax which, of course, two provinces currently have. We don't think a carbon tax is the way to go because a carbon tax means it's the public that pays. On that, we agree with the government.

The alternative is the cap-and-trade system. The cap-and-trade system, simply put, says that those who pollute will pay and the money we raise from those who are polluting will be given to those people who are trying to

reduce carbon emissions into the atmosphere and into the water. In the case of an individual, this includes putting in a new furnace, new windows, doors—and as we saw with the cancellation of the green program, the cancellation of contracts that resulted in all kinds of difficulties for small business because of the lack of foresight and lack of planning of this government in cancelling the program. In the case of a small company, it could mean technological advances for the companies that reduce emissions into the atmosphere.

So cap-and-trade is not strictly a tax. It raises money from those people who pollute and transfers the money to those people who are going to reduce emissions. It's about making polluters pay.

By getting rid of cap-and-trade now, we lose the money that is paid by the polluters in order to have others lessen their emissions.

The context of this is, what is the government's plan? The fact of the matter is, the government has absolutely no plan. That really is shocking.

There are three options we have to reduce emissions: There is a carbon tax, which I've already talked about; there is cap-and-trade, which we are discussing today; and there is regulation of the economy. There is a fourth option, which is to bury your head in the sand and do absolutely nothing, and that, of course, is what this government has decided to do.

It really is incredible when we think that, in 2018, we've talked about forest fires burning in Canada and in the United States and across the world. The east coast of the United States is getting slammed with a hurricane—\$20 billion in damage estimated and three and a half feet of water. There's definitely something happening with climate change. Everyone knows it. To have a government, one of the largest governments in North America, with absolutely no plan to deal with it is really something that is quite incredible.

To recap: Cap-and-trade is not a carbon tax. With a carbon tax, the public pays; with cap-and-trade, polluters pay.

New Democrats agree that there are parts of the cap-and-trade system that need to be fixed, but cancelling the cap-and-trade system does nothing other than lose the money that is paid by polluters. It is a falsehood to call cap-and-trade a tax. Cancelling cap-and-trade is a plan for the rich that leaves the rest of us, our economy and our environment worse off.

This government failed to foresee the policy intersection with cap-and-trade. They claim it will save money, but they set aside \$30 million in legal costs for the constitutional challenge of the federal carbon tax. Who benefits

from this? Small businesses across the province that were hired to fulfill retrofitting contracts are left scrambling.

Instead of investing in a long-term climate strategy, this government has chosen to spend valuable taxpayer dollars on lawyers. Look at the decision with Tesla: They decided to hastily cancel electric vehicle rebates that disproportionately impacted Tesla. As we all know, this government lost the court case. The judge remarked: “If the government wants to transition out of the electric car subsidy program, the” transportation “minister must exercise his operational discretion in a lawful manner. He has yet to do so. I therefore quash and set aside the minister’s unlawful exercises of discretion to implement the transition program announced July 11....”

Beyond the \$30 million above, there are now costs for defending the lawsuit against Tesla, which includes \$125,000 in legal fees for Tesla.

We have Greenpeace. Leading environmental groups have also filed a lawsuit against the Ontario government over the cap-and-trade cancellation. They assert that the government “unlawfully failed” to engage in public consultations. Are we seeing a pattern here? “We’re suing to remind the Premier that winning an election does not give his government carte blanche to ignore the ... rights of Ontarians to be consulted on major changes to the laws and regulations that protect them from climate change.”

This is a disturbing pattern with this government: rash decisions; fire, ready, aim rather than ready, aim, fire with legislation; lawsuits resulting. Who is giving this government legal advice? Better Call Saul?

The cancellation of cap-and-trade was rammed through the Legislature with no consultation, no time in committee and no alternative plan for the environment.

This government has no time for democracy and no interest in consultation. Let’s look at the list: green contracts; Tesla; other cap-and-trade jurisdictions that will bring actions against this government; collective agreements; we saw yesterday the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The government has no interest and no regard for contracts.

Mr. Speaker—Madam Speaker; sorry about that. These are not one-offs. This government is in the habit of ignoring contracts, ignoring collective agreements, ignoring the Constitution. These aren’t the actions of a Conservative government. Conservatives are not for big government bullying businesses, bullying the average person. Conservatives are for smaller government. As Andrew Coyne pointed out recently in an article, these are not the actions of Conservatives; these are not the actions of a Conservative government.

0910

The Conservative government is shirking its responsibilities in one area, and that is to protect the environment for Ontarians today and for future generations. This bill makes no concrete commitments to lowering emissions and fighting climate change. It is taking us backwards, with no solutions. There was no consultation before the government decided unilaterally to rip up contracts and cut programs aimed at reducing Ontario’s emissions. There

was no transparency and no accountability. This is the act of climate change deniers. Why are the Premier and this government catering to the whims of radical special interest groups? Cancelling cap-and-trade is a plan for the rich that leaves the rest of us, our economy and our environment worse off.

According to the government’s technical briefing, families who earn more than \$150,000 a year will see an average benefit of \$403, whereas families earning less than \$40,000 a year will save only \$103 on average. That means wealthy families will see an average annual benefit from cancelling cap-and-trade that is four times greater than families making less than \$40,000. This is a clear slap against poor families, struggling families, businesses that have counted on green rebates, and it is the action of a government that doesn’t keep its promises; it’s a government that breaks contracts, that breaks its word.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and comments?

Mr. Vincent Ke: Good morning. We will use every tool at our disposal to protect Ontario families and businesses from the carbon tax. This will include challenging the carbon tax at the Ontario Court of Appeal. We are confident we will be successful.

Just yesterday, the Prime Minister signalled that he knows the carbon tax is the wrong thing to do by walking it back a bit. We are saying to him that it’s not too late to do the right thing: Cancel the carbon tax.

We made a clear promise to the people of Ontario that we would fight the federal government’s carbon tax with every tool at our disposal. Promise made, promise kept.

Carbon taxes have nothing to do with the environment and everything to do with increasing government revenues. A carbon tax will drive up the cost of gas, home heating fuel and everything else you buy.

Provincially, the Cap and Trade Cancellation Act, if passed, will once and for all end the job-killing cap-and-trade carbon tax of the previous Liberal government. Federally, we are opposing the Trudeau government’s carbon tax law. Our position is that the act is unconstitutional because it is outside of federal jurisdiction and imposes an unconstitutional tax on Ontarians.

Our message to Ontario families, businesses and workers worried about the carbon tax is—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker, and it’s very nice to see you in the chair this morning.

I was very interested in what my colleague from Niagara Centre had to say. His comments make sense. You have a choice. You can agree that climate change is real and that it’s linked to greenhouse gas emissions and do something about it—and he laid out the possibilities. But what we have right now is a government that has said, “Climate change may be real, but whatever we’re doing, let’s not do that anymore.” That doesn’t work. The member from Niagara Centre put it clearly: There are choices that are out there, and the choice to do nothing is a choice. This is the choice that this government has chosen to

make. They have chosen to take away something. Was it perfect? Absolutely not. Nobody would tell you that cap-and-trade was perfect. But did it pay off? It did. Yesterday I gave an example from my riding: Vale made a \$1-billion investment that decreased their greenhouse gas emissions by 120 kilotonnes per year. Was it perfect? No. They're still emitting greenhouse gases, and they could continue to do better. But they were doing something.

What the Conservative government has put right now is that they leave businesses in limbo; businesses don't know. You don't make a \$1-billion investment when you don't know what the future will look like. This is what this Conservative government is all about. Leaving businesses in limbo means that we do nothing; it means that you are a climate change denier. It's as simple as that.

Thank you to the member from Niagara Centre for pointing it out.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Smith: It's interesting to hear our NDP opponents talking about cap-and-trade this way. Really, what it comes down to is, this whole system was put in place to raise government revenues. It had nothing to do with being more effective in reducing greenhouse gases.

We look at a lot of different things that have happened—particularly in my riding. I spoke about this in my inaugural speech. Because of cap-and-trade, it was costing one gentleman \$30 more per month to come in for his life-sustaining kidney dialysis. It wasn't something that was discretionary travel. He needed to do that to stay alive, but there were no provisions put in place for it.

There were so many issues, so many problems with what cap-and-trade was doing in this province. It wasn't a well-thought-out program. We needed to address that.

In Ontario, the Progressive Conservative government under Doug Ford has recognized that taking money from the average person and having no benefit to the province by doing it is not an effective way of generating a strong economy. We've taken a very different approach to it. What we have said instead is that the taxpayer needs to have that money in their pocket. We're looking at saving the average person \$260 per year, and they get to choose what they're going to do with it.

I'm not sure why our NDP opponents would be suggesting that it's wrong for the average person in Ontario to have more money. I was always under the impression that the NDP were trying to support those who had less, but what they're really doing is, they're saying that we should be taking more money out of their pockets. That's not an effective way of running this province.

We know definitively that cap-and-trade was nothing more than a slush fund. It was there to provide extra money for the government to spend on idealistic things. It was not there to improve the environment.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I appreciate the thoughtful debate that the member from Niagara Centre brings to the

House when it comes to legislation that the government has presented.

Speaker, I think people are concerned because this government has a pattern of behaviour of not consulting when they present bills. During the campaign they had this idea about cancelling cap-and-trade, so everybody was aware of it, but they didn't consult with the people it actually affected. Did they consult with businesses on how their sledgehammer legislation was going to affect businesses? Did they consult people who felt the environment needed a cap-and-trade initiative to make sure, going forward, for future generations, we would have a better world for our children? No, they didn't.

0920

They set up this legislation. They have cancelled contracts, and they don't want to take the consequences of cancelling those contracts so they put a provision in this bill to eliminate any business coming after them legally. So, they have absolved themselves—they have claimed immunity—after deciding to cancel contracts, and are just washing their hands of any commitment that a legal contract has. That's just wrong. That doesn't create an environment for businesses to come here and create jobs. That doesn't create a stability in our local economy so that businesses know they can invest in Ontario. This government is truly failing Ontarians and the people when they decide that legislation does not need to be consulted. And that's not the first time, Speaker.

We're talking about the Toronto legislation. They decided no consultation and they're in a legal battle. Their pattern of behaviour is concerning and people are now standing up to this government. Just yesterday in the galleries people were being arrested and taken away because of this legislation they created.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the member from Niagara Centre for a brief comment.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Just to comment on a few of the comments from members from the government: One member mentioned putting money in people's pockets. Talk to the folks in North Carolina on the east coast of the United States and ask them how much money they're going to have in their pockets. Talk to the people up north who have been evacuated from towns due to fires and ask them how much money they're going to have in their pocket. This isn't an issue of putting one or two dollars in somebody's pocket. It's an issue of saving the environment. It's an issue of addressing climate change so that people have a life, never mind an extra \$100 in their pocket.

Secondly, the member talked about this "promise made, promise kept" nonsense. Nobody promised to rip up contracts that have already been signed and made with small businesses. Nobody promised to cut programs that deal with emissions. No one from that side of the House, during the election, promised to act without transparency and accountability. And no one promised to fail to present any kind of alternative to address the environment.

It is absolutely incredible—I'm going to say it again—that one of the largest governments in North America has no environmental plan whatsoever. It's remarkable. I don't

understand how someone can come to this House, go home, talk to their kids, talk to their grandkids, and tell them that you're a member of a government that has no plan—in the year 2018—to address the environment. It's embarrassing. It's embarrassing for all of us. It's embarrassing for every member of this House and it's a disgrace.

I hope that, at some point, members from that side of the House will wake up and develop some kind of a plan so that we can all go home and talk to our families and say, "You know what? I may not be in the government, but at least the government has a plan. I may not agree with it, but at least they're doing something for the environment." This government is doing absolutely nothing.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very pleased to rise today. I represent the constituency of Thornhill and we're discussing the Cap and Trade Cancellation Act, 2018, Loi de 2018 annulant le programme de plafonnement et d'échange. I will be speaking in English on this bill. It's the bill to officially remove the cap-and-trade carbon tax from Ontario's books.

We all are aware, I think, that this was an election where people really seemed a lot more engaged. It was my third election, Madam Speaker, and it was really wonderful for me to go to the doors—it was the first election that I found that I went to the doors and the majority of doors knew there was an election, knew when the election was, and knew what our platform was and what are plans were.

One of the things that I heard at the door was, "You have to end this cap-and-trade scheme." People in Thornhill were quite engaged and quite well aware that even though they want to protect and have clean air and clean water for themselves, for future generations, and they want to fight climate change, they did not see that this was going to do very much. They did not see that the pain of this cap-and-trade scheme was worth the gain.

We made this promise to the people of Ontario that we would scrap what was brought in by the previous Liberal government, and we are working on a plan that we're planning to present this fall. I think Ontario families were hit very, very hard by the soaring electricity rates due to other schemes that were brought in by the Liberal government.

We just heard from the NDP, the official opposition. I remember discussing, and I think some of the members who were here the previous Parliament remember discussing, that northern Ontario is particularly hard hit. It's one of the things that I admit, Madam Speaker: I didn't know a lot about northern Ontario until I came here and understood that they don't have transit. They lost their train. Their electricity costs are soaring. They don't have natural gas coming to their homes the way we do in most of the GTA. The rising electricity costs mean that it's absolutely impossible for them to heat their homes, which often maybe aren't new homes that are very well insulated. So what are they doing? They're going out and cutting down trees. Is there anything more unenvironmental than going out into the forest, cutting down trees and burning them to heat your home because there's no electricity?

Interjections.

Mrs. Gila Martow: That's sad.

When I speak to people, they want to see trees being planted in Ontario. They want to see a tree canopy. They don't want to see people having to go out and cut down trees to heat their homes—absolutely not.

Carbon pricing: We hear in discussion that it's going to reduce emissions. The studies show that it reduces emissions by such a small amount that there's really no way to even reach the targets that we were going to set. The Auditor General reported that the joint market with Quebec and California would result in, basically, capital. That means money—our businesses paying money that is going to flow to Ontario and Quebec.

Look, on this side of the House, we're all committed to using all available resources to challenge the federal government's plan to impose any kind of carbon tax. We understand that a tax is a tax, no matter what kind of spin you put on it, and that any type of new tax is going to chase jobs out of the province. That's why we're planning to challenge, with a court challenge, the federal government's carbon tax plan.

I really think that Ontarians elected a Conservative government because they were afraid. They are seeing well-paying jobs being developed elsewhere. They are seeing their children graduating university and not finding a job or not finding meaningful employment. They see new taxes piling on, on top of old taxes. They just don't see a government with a plan to prioritize to ensure that we are looking after what people care about.

We know that more money for businesses and disposable income for households boosts consumption, exports, output, business investment and, yes, even employment. We are kind of on a downward spin, I think, the province of Ontario, in terms of good-paying jobs, in terms of all the challenges for businesses, all the regulations, the electricity, even the traffic congestion. When I visit businesses, they say to me that it's costing them so much more to run their business because they need more trucks, because the trucks take twice as long to make their deliveries—and I'm sure their suppliers as well. Well, what could be more unenvironmental than having trucks sitting all day in traffic, burning fuel?

There are a lot of things that we can do just in our communities to fight for better flow of traffic, better use of transit and better transit planning. I really think that's what the new Ford administration is all about: having a clear plan for the GTA to promote business, improve people's quality of life, get traffic moving, get business booming and get the job market back to where it should be.

I don't want to repeat everything that has already been said, but I just want to say that, according to what we're looking at in terms of having a plan this fall, I'm really looking forward to hearing from my constituents. I think that many of us here in the House enjoy hearing from our constituents about many of their concerns. I'm sitting with the member from Brampton West. I know that they have a lot of the same concerns that we do over here in Thornhill. We see in York region that the traffic has gotten to the

point where to drive within the region takes as long, probably, as driving the same distance in downtown Toronto. Maybe that surprises some of the members from downtown Toronto who don't come up to the suburbs very often. The Yonge subway has been a dream for 30 years and nothing gets done.

0930

They're not against paying taxes. What they want is they want to pay for taxes where they see the money going to something concrete, something worthwhile, something improving the environment, something improving people's lives. They want to see that measure of success that they have not felt from the previous administration.

As many of us were making our way in here today, I think, we're following the storm, Florence, the hurricane, heading for Myrtle Beach. The member opposite mentioned it. We are concerned about the oceans getting warmer. We are concerned about emissions. We are concerned about maintaining our clean water supply. Canada is so lucky to have a clean water supply. But just coming up with ideologies and saying that a carbon tax or a cap-and-trade scheme is going to somehow be the magic wand that halts climate change, halts any kind of devastation and any kind of storm—we have to rely on the proper science and not just charge people to pollute, not just have people pay to pollute, but actually come up with plans where we get people to contribute on their own to making the world a much healthier place for all of us to live, to ensure that we have healthy food supplies for future generations.

My father was a meteorologist. He worked for Environment Canada. He would talk quite often about the devastating storms and climate change and global warming, and what politicians can do, specifically when I got involved in politics. One of the things he did complain about is maybe more municipal, but I think we all have a role here to play. Oftentimes buildings are built in places or in a manner without taking into account the wind tunnels that are created, without taking into account the stormwater, and without taking into account the future repairs that are going to have to be made.

In terms of transit planning, we have to do this in a bigger planning effort involving and working with all of our different levels of government and ensuring that we come up with a GTA- and province-wide plan to not just improve the environment but to improve the quality of life, improve our economy, improve our infrastructure, and improve our transit.

I really believe that we got off to a very strong start. I know I'm hearing it from my constituents and you are as well, I'm sure, that they are in awe that we came back to work so quickly, we got to work on so many bills. We repaired a lot of what people thought were damaging plans by the previous administration. We're ensuring that we have the right plans in place for the entire province of Ontario, for all the people in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and comments? I recognize the member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Merci, madame la Présidente. Sorry, Mike, si je t'ai volé quelque chose, mais c'était plus fort que moi; ça m'achalait d'entendre des conneries.

When I heard my colleague from Thornhill speaking about cutting trees, "It's such a shame that we're cutting trees to heat ourselves," you have to realize, in some communities, that's the only heat they have. You have to realize, in some communities, when they do it, they have to have a permit to go cut the trees to heat themselves. So we just don't go and cut any tree. By the way, green trees or fresh trees, they don't burn. We cut the ones that are dead to heat our homes. It's not about going out there and cutting all these nice trees. It's not at all about that.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You can't afford your hydro bill.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: We can't afford our hydro bill. By the way, we have other sources of heating also. But it's not about just cutting these green trees. Forests are no different than the field; it regrows. That's what we do. That's a way of living up north. We have cabins, we have camps that we have to heat with trees. So we do cut trees; it's a form of life up north. But we cut the ones that are already dead to heat ourselves, because green trees don't burn. It's as simple as that; they don't. And if you do, you have to wait two to three years to be able to burn them, but you need a permit to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and comments?

Mr. Billy Pang: The prime goal for cap-and-trade is to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. When talking about trade, that means that money can buy the right for the emission of carbon dioxide. But where does the money come from? The money comes from the customers—not from the owners, not from the shareholders, nor from the directors of the industry, but the customers. That means it will impact the economy and the lives of the general public. Also, the amount of carbon dioxide won't be reduced.

As a responsible government, we make responsible policies to develop a plan that is affordable and practical for Ontarians.

When we look at the bill itself, it says: "Under the Cap and Trade Cancellation Act, 2018, the government is required to establish targets for reducing the amount of greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario. The Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks is required to prepare a climate change plan and to prepare progress reports in respect of the plan."

Within this bill, it is mandatory that our government understands the impact of the greenhouse effect. This is not a government that is not concerned about the climate; we are concerned about the climate. Therefore, in this bill, we stated that we are going to develop a plan. But if some plan is not working at all, at that point in time we will cancel it, and we will develop a plan that is workable and affordable for Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: My goodness, I just couldn't hold myself back this morning. I'm sure Jamie Lim of the

OFIA is probably sitting in her office right now—as the members who were in our galleries yesterday—holding back on the verbal vomit that was coming out of the speaker from Thornhill who just spoke.

Listen, she's a great friend of mine and I do want to offer an olive branch to say: Talk to your Minister of Natural Resources and get a little bit more informed about the sustainable forestry act. It's a big tool, something that the NDP government had brought in a long time ago, which protects our forests, which gives good practices to individuals—which the government charges permits for—when they go out to get this firewood. Are you looking to use the “notwithstanding” clause to eliminate those permits as well? I'm just saying.

Listen, there were a lot of problems with the cap-and-trade. We have said this time and time again: It was not a perfect system.

She touched on northern Ontario and the issues that we're looking for and the discussions that we had brought forward. One of those discussions was that we had wanted to put in an amendment in order to put \$20 million aside specifically for the challenges that were there from northern Ontario. The government of the day did not accept our amendment. Was it the best thing they could have done? Absolutely not. There are a lot more challenges for northern Ontario as well.

I often get referred to as a radical from northern Ontario. My goodness. My friend, you've just given me an opportunity to look at you and say that you must be some kind of tree-hugging radical person, who I'm going to be looking towards for some assistance in the very near future.

Listen, I have the utmost respect for you, but please, please, please have a discussion with the Minister of Natural Resources. It's something that you absolutely need—you and many of your colleagues.

0940

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions and comments? I recognize the member from—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Radical social conservative.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): —King-Vaughan. Order.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: That is me. That is me.

Good morning, Madam Speaker. Thank you so much. I appreciate that. The House leader caught me there.

I do want to respond to the members opposite and thank them for their perspective this morning. I think the tone of this House is a bit more in keeping with the traditions of this Legislature.

I do want to speak to the member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay. I hope I did not bastardize that, sir. Close enough? No? It was bad? Okay, I'm sorry. He invoked an analogy of forestry and trees. Obviously, we support the sustainable development of our natural resources, but I must remind the members opposite that money does not grow on trees, contrary to the popular belief of the New Democratic Party. I just want to make clear what this bill does: It ensures cheaper gas prices, it ensures lower hydro

bills and it delivers more money in the pockets of working people in this province. There should be political unanimity when it comes to making life more affordable for people in this province.

We campaigned on a mandate to reduce prices and make life affordable. We are putting \$260, Madam Speaker, back in the pockets of working people. This is not insignificant. This is an incremental step in helping to realize a commitment we made to the people of this province to deliver economic prosperity.

By repealing this legislation, we are going to help create 14,000 private sector, quality jobs that our young people in the next generation will depend on. This is real progress for the prosperity of our province, and we're hoping that every single member of this House will stand with us in the pursuit of opportunity and ultimately support our initiatives to make our economy more competitive.

Industry in this province: Having travelled across southern Ontario, I've met with many job creators in the GTA over the past months in my capacity at infrastructure. I will tell you that the greatest obstacle to economic prosperity is the imposition of higher taxes, higher regulations and protectionism around the world. We are fighting that every step of the way. I urge the members opposite to join us as we help to grow this economy.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the member from Thornhill for a brief statement.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I enjoy learning from my colleagues across the aisle in the NDP and learning about the challenges of northern Ontario, which is what I was trying to highlight. I think what they enjoy trying to teach us down here in the GTA—those of us who don't make it to northern Ontario very often and haven't seen much of northern Ontario—is to understand the challenges. That's what I was highlighting, that there are those in northern Ontario who have electricity, who have electric heating in their homes, and who have mostly heated their homes with electricity for decades and are unable to do so.

It's one thing if you choose to get the permits and to cut down dead trees and use them for firewood. There are certainly those of us in the GTA who have real fireplaces. It's certainly nice on a winter day when it's snowing to have a real fireplace. But we're also aware that in Montreal and in Vancouver, they banned wood-burning fireplaces unless they had special inserts put in to reduce the emissions, because they said that the smog created was very close to the smog created by emissions of cars and trucks in the cities. It obviously was enough of a concern for Montreal and for Vancouver to ban regular wood-burning fireplaces and wood-burning stoves. The inserts are very expensive—\$2,000 to \$8,000 is what my research on my phone just told me. So, obviously, not too many people did that.

We all understand that there can be power failures, that there can be instances where we're all very happy that we stockpiled some firewood and that we have fireplaces in our homes, but it comes down to a question of choice. I don't think that those in northern Ontario with electric heating in their homes want to give up the choice, the ability, to heat their homes with electricity.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and I'm looking forward to hearing more debate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? I recognize the member from Mushkegowuk–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The tree-cutter.

Mr. Guy Bourgoin: Tree-cutting and burning.

Our colleagues across, when speaking about cap-and-trade, refer to it as a “tax, tax, tax.” It's not all about the tax, tax, tax; it's about climate change. We understand, on this side, that cap-and-trade had things that had to be tweaked or had issues, but at least it was something. But climate change is real—even more up north.

As you know, Madam Speaker, my riding is in the northern portion of the province, Mushkegowuk–James Bay. Up north, I say, is where we see the effects of climate change the most. So let me tell my colleagues across the real effects it has on my riding and the people who live there.

I'll speak about the community of Kashechewan of approximately 2,500, living on the James Bay coast at 35 feet of elevation. They are surrounded by a dike that holds the mighty Albany River. In the spring, ice break-up used to be more gradual, letting the water flow more gradually, and the dike would hold the river. Now flooding is an annual event. Now every year families have to be evacuated to other communities. Think about this, being evacuated every year: the stress on the family that they go through, not to mention the cost of the evacuation. But no, it's a tax, tax, tax.

Last week I went to Kash, as the chief had declared a state of emergency. They closed the elementary school for health and safety reasons. This elementary school is all portable units that were supposed to be temporary for five years, and it's been 10 years that these portable units are being used.

My first impression of this elementary school, I can tell you, was that it looked more like a war camp than an elementary school. I say that because when we are accustomed to going to schools, we see a playground; we see a traditional building of a school. This wasn't it. It left a lasting impression on me.

These portables are in such bad condition because of the flooding, the freezing and the thawing that when you walk in, you smell the humidity. You walk and the floors are going like this or like that. There are gaps under the doors because they have to shave the doors because of the building warping and the mould.

I met a young girl; she had tears in her eyes. It was her first day of school. She was starting—first time—elementary school. She had her new running shoes; she had all of her clothes her mother had bought—no different than our kids when they want to go to school. We dress them up. We make sure that they have all new stuff. But her school was closed because it was unsafe.

The floor was so warped and bad that in the winter sometimes they pried the doors open to let the kids out or in. Like I said, they shaved some of the doors so that they can open. In one place, we went to the gym. You could see

outside under the door. The gym teacher was telling me that they shovel snow out, and then she puts a yoga mat to stop the snow so that it doesn't come in. The kids wear their winter clothes to play in the gym. The gym is so bad that they have to put mats around so that the nails and the screws don't come out.

We also went around and visited houses because of the flooding. People were coming to us: “Come and see my home.” They wanted us to see this, because they wanted to show us the conditions they live in. You can see the mould. You can smell it, first of all, and you walk into the house and in certain rooms you see the mould. Do you know what they do to cover the mould? They paint over it to hide it.

0950

I was also speaking to one of the band council members about the ice roads and the conditions. These ice roads are a lifeline to these communities. It gives them access to other—also, it's an economic lifeline to these communities. It takes three hours to go to Moosonee and another five to go to Timmins. But because of climate change, now they lose these ice roads earlier and, because it's warmer now in the winter, these road conditions are bad. You have to know, Mushkegowuk, if you leave Moosonee and you fly there—I invite all the members to take an opportunity to come; it's like a different place. It's all muskeg, so you can imagine the roads, they thaw out, and the condition of the roads.

That's a real effect of climate change on those communities. It's not just about a “tax, tax, tax.” Other First Nation communities, like Attawapiskat, are also subject to more flooding.

If this government recognizes that climate change exists, then they need to propose a bill before removing one that could be fixed.

Madame la Présidente, je ne sais pas si vous le savez, mais ma circonscription comprend aussi beaucoup d'opérations forestières. Avec ce projet de loi, qui ne s'adresse aucunement au réchauffement de la planète, beaucoup de compagnies forestières sont sujettes à des fermetures de printemps. Aussi, avec leurs opérations, elles sont obligées d'opérer soit le matin ou le soir, et ça c'est aussi pour éviter de créer des feux de forêts. Les opérateurs me disaient qu'ils sont rendus à bûcher dans les swamps. On appelle ça des « swamps », les marécages. Puis ils disent que c'est sec tout partout.

Que dire des feux de forêts? Cette année on a eu 1 312 feux dans la province. Ça représente 2 061 584 hectares brûlés, une perte économique énorme pour la province et pour les compagnies forestières et les communautés qui en dépendent. Et ça, c'est sans compter le coût pour combattre les feux, qui est énorme.

Aujourd'hui : pas de programme de nos collègues pour remplacer la taxe de carbone. Mais, non, la seule chose qu'on entend c'est « taxe, taxe, taxe », la fameuse toune de « taxe, taxe, taxe ». Ils nous disent qu'ils reconnaissent le changement climatique, qu'il existe, mais il n'y a toujours pas de proposition. Comme j'ai dit au début, je reconnais que la taxe de carbone avait des lacunes, mais

de n'avoir aucune solution pour la remplacer est irresponsable de la part d'un gouvernement.

Je peux vous avouer, madame la Présidente, que nous avons beaucoup d'appels dans mon comté, à mon bureau de circonscription, concernant les programmes de rénovations. Je peux vous dire aussi qu'avec le petit peu, les quelques 100 \$, qu'ils nous proposent—le programme qu'on a perdu pour les rénovations—ça coûte pas mal plus cher quand on est obligé de rénover.

Il faut réaliser que, dans le Nord, il fait froid. Les hivers sont froids. Non, je vais vous dire ça : ils sont « frets »; c'est encore plus que « froids ». Puis les programmes de rénovations—il faut que vous réalisiez que les demeures qui ne sont pas rénovées, à cause du froid, détériorent plus vite.

Pour finir—je vois que je suis après manquer de temps—les Premières Nations ont une belle histoire qui devrait nous porter à réfléchir. Ça va comme suit : Lorsque l'homme blanc aura coupé tous les arbres, tué tous les animaux, mangé tous les poissons et asséché toutes les rivières et les lacs, alors il verra, à la fin, que l'argent ne se mange pas et ne se boit pas.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Madam Speaker, I rise here today to support Bill 4. This bill will save the average family at least \$260 each year in addition to 10 cents on a litre of gas. This will help make life easier and more affordable for Ontario families.

I would like to begin by thanking two residents of Mississauga—Lakeshore, Bill and Muriel Chudiak. When the Liberal government claimed cap-and-trade would cost them \$5 a month on natural gas bills, the Chudiaks went to work with the help of the Enbridge Consumers Gas department. The Chudiaks realized and found out “it would cost us double or triple this.” It is difficult with a family on a fixed income.

This was a regressive tax. It forced poor and middle-class Ontarians to pay more for basic necessities. As former Premier Kathleen Wynne admitted, because of her mistake on the energy file, some Ontarians were forced to choose between paying their electric bill and buying food or paying for rent. Combined with skyrocketing hydro rates and the growth of red tape under the previous government, cap-and-trade made Ontario a challenging jurisdiction for businesses, particularly for manufacturing.

In total, cap-and-trade would have cost Ontario families and businesses \$2 billion every year, with hundreds of millions sent to California and Quebec. What's worse, Madam Speaker, is that the Auditor General in November 2016 found that the Liberal government did not study whether this would actually contribute to additional emissions reduction in Quebec or California. In other words, the Auditor General wrote, “these funds may be leaving the Ontario economy for no purpose other than to help the government claim it has met a target.”

Madam Speaker, that's just not good enough for Ontarians. We need a plan that our families can afford and that ensures Ontario is open for business.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and comments? I recognize the member for Algoma—Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Speaker, and good morning to you. You know, it's always nice getting up when you hear the new members addressing and talking about the issues that matter most to them and their constituents. Keep doing that, my friend from Mushkegowuk—James Bay. I'm looking forward to hearing a lot more comments from you, in regard to how it affects the many communities that you represent from northern Ontario, particularly Kashechewan.

I know of the plight. Both the federal member, Charlie Angus, and yourself were just out there recently. You see some of those images, and it's gut-wrenching. Roughly about, I would say, four or five years ago, some colleagues and I—the member from Timmins—James Bay then and other members—did a tour of some of these communities: Eabametoong, Attawapiskat. We looked at some of the challenges that these families face.

I remember this one young family who had set up a makeshift house in their parents' driveway because there were too many people who were living in the home. So they built their own home, a 20-by-20 structure—very proud, very clean, very beautiful. She had two children. Her husband worked at the mine. She was so proud that she had the ability of putting two-inch Styrofoam into her walls. That was the highlight that she wanted to show to us. The unfortunate part is that she didn't have enough Styrofoam to put up in her ceilings, and all of the heat that was in the home was escaping.

Those are real challenges. These are the real faces of individuals across this province in Ontario right now. If we're a part of this cap-and-trade program, we're going to be able to assist these individuals in order to be meeting their needs, making sure that their kids are properly fed.

Take a walk—you don't even have to take a walk; look it up on the Internet. Look at the cost of three quarts of milk in Attawapiskat. Look up the cost for a small block of cheese, and you're going to find out what the real challenge is for real people in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Calandra: Madam Speaker, I think the member's speech itself highlights why cap-and-trade just isn't working for the people of Ontario. He highlighted in his earlier question the fact that people in his riding do things differently than we would do here in southern Ontario. That is a reality that cap-and-trade just does not allow us to address. Collecting a universal tax on people across the province—yes, it's effective at collecting this tax, but it isn't going to solve the problems that we have in Attawapiskat. Infrastructure improvements will help address some of those problems.

I was a bit late coming in today. It took me two and a half hours to drive 48 kilometres from Stouffville—48 kilometres, two and a half hours. It's absolutely unacceptable. Why are we in this position today? Because the city of Toronto has been unable to make decisions on

subways, which has left the eastern part of my riding without access to a subway, without access to a roadway to get in, so we're all forced onto the Don Valley Parkway.

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The GO train service is overtaxed, so some 3,000 people towards the eastern part of Markham are forced onto the same roadway that the rest of the 1.2 million people in my region are forced onto, because we don't have a subway connection in York region on Yonge street. We don't have a subway connection or the rapid transit which was announced 10 years ago along Sheppard Avenue—10 years ago, and \$5 billion sitting in an account unused, which has left the entire eastern part of York region without access to public transportation systems that would get us downtown.

So we can do things a bit differently. I know the member will acknowledge this. Protecting the environment will mean different things to different communities. For my community, protecting the environment means getting us to work faster and getting us out of cars. It means bringing our natural heritage under the protection of government, like we did federally with Rouge Park. There are a lot of different things that we can do, and I think collecting a tax, a regressive tax, is the worst thing, because as we have proven, it does not work in making our environment cleaner.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was very interesting to listen to my colleague from Mushkegowuk—James Bay put forward real-life examples from his riding of what climate change means. It means that life is becoming more and more difficult for the people of his riding because of the unsettling winter, where we go from having 12 degrees and pouring rain, and the next day it's minus 40 and everything is icy. You think that the ice going across the lake is good, but the river thins it out and then your snowmobile or truck goes through the ice. All of this is directly linked to climate change.

We see it in the north. Every single season, we can see the difference. We can now have sweet potatoes in Nickel Belt. We've never been able to grow sweet potatoes in Nickel Belt; it's too cold. Now we do. We see species of animals, birds and plants that we've never seen before.

He was telling you of examples from his riding to tell you that climate change is real. It is happening. It is having an impact on people's lives, and you need a plan. To simply scrap what was there is not enough. You are supposedly a government for the people. What happened to the people of northern Ontario? What happened to the people of Mushkegowuk—James Bay? Aren't you a government for them also? This is what he's talking about, that you need to have a plan. You need to look outside of Toronto as to what is going on. Listen to what he has to say. It's worth listening to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay for his response.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I appreciate all the debate. I hear my colleagues talking about two-hour drives. I do understand, but think about this: breathing mould year-round, having two or three generations living in the same house. We walked into these houses. They had queen beds piled on each other that they pull into the living room and they sleep there, in that house that has mould.

I understand what you're saying, but there's a reality up north. That's why I keep saying that I invite you to come and visit. Come and see how cap-and-trade could help this situation. If cap-and-trade is not good, then what's your program? You're saying it's a tax, tax, tax, but if it's not cap-and-trade, what is it? Nothing, absolutely nothing. That's what we haven't seen.

I can tell you that these people, my constituents, are hurting. It's taking away their lives' dignity in some cases. It's not just about travelling. I understand that we have to look outside of the GTA and Toronto, because northern Ontario is hurting bad. You see the kids asking for a new school. Why is it normal in Ontario that kids can't have a new school? Because the conditions of that school—it's unacceptable in Ontario today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to be able to participate in this morning's debate on Bill 4, which I support.

Speaker, when the legislation was first introduced in the assembly by my colleague the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, he spoke about two important aspects: first, that this legislation fulfills a promise made to the people of Ontario; and second, that while accepting and understanding the challenges that climate change presents, the solution is not to be found in a regressive tax.

During the election campaign, one question more than any other kept being asked of me: "How are you going to put people first and make life more affordable for my family?" The people of Whitby have made it abundantly clear to me that they do not want an unfair tax that puts the burden on their families and local businesses.

Speaker, the government ran its election campaign on the promise to get rid of cap-and-trade, and this legislation does exactly that.

I'm proud to tell my constituents that Ontario's carbon tax era is over. The plan to eliminate cap-and-trade will mean cheaper gas prices, lower energy bills and more money in the pockets of hard-working Ontarians. The government's plan is both responsible and respectful of taxpayers' money.

The legislation will not only save the average family \$260 per year, but the elimination of the cap-and-trade carbon tax will eliminate a costly burden from Ontario businesses as well. You know, Speaker, from your hard work with the local business association in the riding that you represent—and with the Whitby chamber—that this is something they've been asking for for a long time. They will be better positioned for growth, job creation and the ability to successfully compete in other jurisdictions. We're anticipating that, when enacted, this legislation will

lead to the creation of an estimated 14,000 jobs in the province. This is what the people of Whitby can look forward to, and this is what all of Ontario can look forward to: 14,000 new jobs. Ontario is open for business again.

Our government looks forward to moving past the previous government's obsession with raising taxes, and instead is focusing, as it should, on an environmental plan that actually works. We made it clear that this government will deliver real action on providing clean air and water, reducing emissions, providing better solutions for cleaning up litter, garbage and waste, and providing Ontarians with real action on conservation.

With the passage of Bill 4, our province will be in a far better place for addressing real environmental goals, including, of course, the real battle against climate change.

It's too easy for those in opposition to our legislation to make an illogical leap and conclude that the government benches are filled with climate change deniers. That is not who we are.

In May 2018, Philip Cross wrote an opinion piece in the Toronto Star on the topic of carbon taxes and emissions. Mr. Cross is a Munk senior fellow at the Macdonald-Laurier Institute. He noted this: When first proposed, a carbon tax had the potential to be an effective way of achieving the long-term goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but the ongoing campaign conducted by advocates has become so politicized by ideology that it is no longer politically tenable. And with rising oil prices, it is no longer practically tenable for Ontarians.

1010

Now, it's also relevant to note, as Mr. Cross points out, that in order to achieve the goal of curtailing fossil fuels enough to satisfy the Paris climate agreement, our current technology requires carbon taxes so incredibly high that they would be a crippling and practical non-starter.

The government is united in opposing a carbon tax largely because the long-standing suspicion that carbon taxes would simply become another tax grab has been confirmed.

Well, Speaker, the reality of the BC experience was very different indeed. The article goes on to state that the current BC government has dropped the term "revenue-neutral" completely and now calls the carbon tax a "tool."

The carbon tax in Ontario would, if left unchecked, be a very expensive reality for Ontario families. A carbon tax added to the higher oil prices makes it far too punitive for the average family already struggling to pay monthly bills. We promised that we would act, and we have.

Mr. Cross states that in jurisdictions where carbon taxes are imposed, governments use the generated revenues to increase government spending and not to curb income taxes. This government has pledged not to do that, and this legislation, when passed, will send that message in a very unequivocal fashion to all residents of Ontario. What's clear here is that we're here for you, the taxpayer.

We heard it in every riding. We heard at the door continually what an issue this was. How are you going to put people first—

Mr. Stephen Lecce: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the deputy House leader on a point of order.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I apologize to the member for my interruption. Madam Speaker, if I may seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the International Plowing Match.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Lecce is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I move that when the House adjourns today, it stands adjourned until Wednesday, September 19, at 9 a.m.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Lecce has moved that when the House adjourns today, it stands adjourned until Wednesday, September 19, at 9 a.m.

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

Motion agreed to.

CAP AND TRADE CANCELLATION ACT, 2018

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

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Back to the member from Whitby.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you very much, Speaker. To conclude, I voice my support for Bill 4. It will satisfy our promise to the taxpayers and it will create the groundwork for the implementation of a comprehensive environmental strategy. I thank my colleague the Minister of the Environment for his leadership and dedication to this file. Colleagues: promises made, promises kept.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): It being close to 10:15, this House is now recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that, in accordance with section 87 of the Legislative Assembly Act, the names of the following persons appointed to serve on the Board of Internal Economy have been communicated to me as Chair of the Board of Internal Economy: The Honourable Sylvia Jones, MPP, is appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council from among the members of the executive council, and John Vanthof, MPP, is appointed by the caucus of the official opposition.

Interjection.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, you are already aware that the leader of the official opposition has registered her intent to file a reasoned amendment on Bill 31.

In addition to that, we currently are in the process of reviewing the bill. I believe there are some real concerns with it vis-à-vis standing orders 23 and 52. I just want to give you a heads-up that I will be presenting these concerns to you on the next sessional day that the House meets.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I appreciate the advance notice. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I'm delighted today to be joined by two family friends, Julie Giffin and Diana Stewart, as well as a very special guest, my mother, Janine Roberts, without whom I would not have made it through the recent election.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: It's my pleasure to introduce Rory Taylor. He's my legislative assistant. He's from Manotick, which is part of my riding of Carleton. I just want to welcome him to Toronto, and I look forward to having him work with me to help serve the people of Carleton.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'd like to welcome my friend and long-time adviser Stephen Ahad, as well as my chief of staff, Becky Smit, who are both in the members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question is to the Premier. The question is this: Is former Premier Bill Davis an NDP Toronto city councillor?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Leader of the Opposition: I want to remind the Leader of the Opposition why we're doing this. We're doing this because there's absolute gridlock. The hard-working people in the back of the factories, the hard-working people in the offices, the hard-working construction folks take three hours out of their day to go from their home to work. That's three hours a day. That's costing the economy, by the way, billions and billions of dollars. We're doing this because we have a dysfunctional government and we need to build transit, because Toronto is one of the major engines, along with the 905, keeping this province moving forward.

We're in a crisis when it comes to housing—an absolute crisis. People can't even find places to live.

Infrastructure is crumbling underneath our feet. We—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, yesterday the Premier insisted that only NDP Toronto city councillors

objected to his scheme to override the Charter of Rights, yet even as he was saying those words, former Premier Bill Davis was denouncing this Premier's plan. To quote the former PC Premier, that section 33 "might now be used regularly to assert the dominance of any ... elected politician over the rule of law or the legitimate jurisdiction of our courts of law was never anticipated or agreed to." Premier Davis was at the table when the charter was drafted. He was the leader of the Premier's party. Can the Premier explain why he's right and the former PC Premier is not?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I could start naming all the constitutional experts across this country who totally disagree. I could throw up former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien. I could start naming them all, but I'm not going to. What I'm going to do, my friends: We're going to focus on turning this province around.

I just wonder what the Leader of the Opposition and all her members were doing when the Liberal government was losing 300,000 jobs, when they were raising hydro rates to be the highest in North America, when they were raising taxes to an unprecedented level. I'll tell you what the NDP were doing: They were propping them up. They were supporting them. I never saw them protest. They're protesting to protect their downtown NDP buddies. That's why they're protesting.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Premier Davis isn't the only Conservative coming out against this Premier's plan to override the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney says he's not a fan of the "notwithstanding" clause and never has been. Former PC cabinet minister Brad Clark says he has never supported the "notwithstanding" clause or its invocation. Former federal justice minister and federal PC leader Peter Mackay joined the chorus and said that "it was never intended for this purpose."

The only Conservatives defending the Premier's decision are the ones who rely on him for their jobs. How can the Premier be so certain that he is right when so many thoughtful Conservatives are telling him that he is utterly and totally wrong?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Thank you for such kind words, that you agree with some great Conservative leaders.

My friends, we're going to make sure we get this city going. Again, I just find it amazing how they brought all their buddies down yesterday. They were all jumping around, up and down. Where were these people when people's hydro was getting cut off? Thousands of families around this province were getting their hydro cut off. I didn't hear the Leader of the Opposition say a peep. When 300,000 people were losing their jobs, I never heard the Leader of the Opposition say a peep.

When the Leader of the Opposition was threatening to close down the Pickering nuclear facility—4,500 jobs—they would have been out of a job right now if it was up to the NDP. We would be paying two dollars a litre for gas if it was up to the NDP.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier, but I will say that what wasn't the case during the election campaign remains not the case today, Speaker.

Notwithstanding that, the Premier has bragged very clearly that he won't be shy about overriding the charter again if there are issues where he just isn't getting his way. Can the Premier tell us if there is any circumstance at all in which he wouldn't override the charter?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Leader of the Opposition: This is in the Constitution, section 92, subsection 8. If it wasn't there to be used, it would not be there.

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My friends, we're here to stand up for the people. We have a dysfunctional government in the city of Toronto. We're here to turn it around.

I can tell you that whoever the mayor is going to be, they're going to be happy as punch, because they're going to be able to actually get things done rather than talk about shark-fin soup for two or three days, which they do down there. Rather than talk about a bunch of nonsense, we're going to be able to build subways, we're going to be able to get this city moving and we're going to fix the housing crisis in this city.

Interjections.

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

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier was crystal clear: He's not going to be shy about overriding our charter rights. The town of Ajax has passed a resolution condemning the Premier's plan to override the charter because they fear that they could be next. While the member for Nepean insists that Ottawa's council is safe, the Premier went on the radio, musing that he might be willing to throw that city's election into chaos, too.

Now that the Premier has shown that he's ready to do this to Ontarians in the city of Toronto, why should anyone believe that he won't do it again and again?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Where was the leader of the NDP when the Liberals were raising taxes and hydro rates, making it the most indebted region in the world?

I didn't see all the lawsuits coming. I did not see any lawsuits coming from their special interest groups—political activists who are getting paid by these special interest groups to come down here and disrupt Queen's Park.

We live in a democracy. This is going to be the will of the people. We were elected by 2.3 million people to move forward and make changes in this province.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to get this province going. We're going to make sure that we lower gas prices, we lower taxes and we put money back into the people's pocket instead of taking money.

You know one thing, and that's to raise taxes, to raise gas prices—

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

Interjections.

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

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would ask—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The Premier will come to order. The member for Waterloo will come to order. The member for Scarborough Southwest, come to order.

Start the clock. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I suspect, Speaker, that the Premier missed a heck of a lot of what went on in Ontario because he was probably in Chicago during that time.

Listen, Ontarians need a government that will tackle wait times in hospitals. That's what Ontarians need—a government that will tackle wait times in hospitals, the state of our classrooms and the communities that have been hit so hard by job loss under this government's short watch. Instead, we have a Premier who is taking a chainsaw to the Charter of Rights to implement a scheme that he didn't even campaign on. He has made it clear that nobody's rights in this province are safe.

Why won't the Premier step back, admit that this is wrong, scrap this bill and respect the people of Ontario and Canada?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Again, I want to find out where the NDP was for the last 15 years. They were propping up the Liberals.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Yes, 97%.

Hon. Doug Ford: Ninety-seven per cent of the time, they were in favour of raising hydro rates, raising taxes and losing 300,000 jobs. Where were you, Leader of the Opposition? I'll tell you where the Leader of the Opposition was. They were side by side with the Liberal government, destroying this province. They were side by side with this government in creating the green energy scam, the carbon tax and the Green Energy Act. That's what you were focused on. You weren't focused on creating jobs because ever since we've been down here, Leader of the Opposition, through you, Mr. Speaker, not one idea have you ever come up with reducing taxes or creating jobs. You're too busy—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Premier will take his seat.

Interjections.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: You're creating jobs for lawyers; that's it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Niagara Falls, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas, come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government side, come to order.

Start the clock. Next question.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Deputy Premier. As the candidate for the PC leadership who received the highest number of votes from PC members, how comfortable is she with the plan to override the charter rights that have been denounced by party luminaries like Bill Davis, Peter MacKay and Brian Mulroney?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I defer the question to the Premier.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The opposition will come to order. Member for Essex, come to order. The clock is ticking.

Premier?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you what my great Deputy Premier and Minister of Health is doing: working around the clock fixing the broken health care system that you helped the Liberals prop up; helping reduce the debt; helping create jobs. That's what we need in Ontario. We need to create good-paying jobs. We need to reduce the taxes, which we're doing, to a point of 20% for anyone making up towards \$80,000. We're actually putting money back into those folks' pockets. The people on minimum wage are going to pay a zero per cent tax. They'll have a tax credit of \$800 rather than being taxed to death—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Deputy Premier: During the last election campaign, the Conservative brain trust put the Deputy Premier front and centre. She was supposed to be a key member of the team speaking for the sort of traditional Progressive Conservative values exemplified by Bill Davis and Brian Mulroney. Now they are speaking out, but she is silent.

A former PC Premier, a former PC Prime Minister, former PC leaders, both federal and provincial, former PC cabinet ministers, federal and provincial—all of these folks are speaking up against a plan that tramples on the charter. Why does the Deputy Premier think they're wrong and her Premier is right?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Maybe the Leader of the Opposition should start focusing on saving jobs rather than tweeting nasty tweets last night—the most insulting tweet I've every seen; finally had enough common sense to take it down.

But that's their method. Their method is attack, attack, attack, rather than create jobs, lower taxes, putting money back into people's pockets instead of lining their own pockets, taking care of all their downtown NDP councillors and taking care of their political activists. That's what they're concerned about.

We're concerned about lowering taxes, lowering gas prices, lowering hydro rates by 12%, putting 10 cents per litre back into the people's pockets and driving the economy. As I've always said, a new day has dawned in Ontario.

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INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH

Mr. Dave Smith: In the spirit of how things are going today, I have a very tough and difficult question for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Interjection: Who wrote it for you?

Mr. Dave Smith: Actually, I wrote it; thank you very much.

Earlier today, we sought unanimous consent in order for the House to not sit Monday, September 17 and Tuesday, September 18, to allow the members of the Legislature to attend the International Plowing Match. Can the minister tell us why attending the 2018 International Plowing Match is so important to the government of Ontario?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. The 2018 International Plowing Match is the 101st International Plowing Match for the province. This year it will be held in Pain Court, Ontario, and is one of the largest outdoor events of its kind in North America.

This government is committed to supporting rural Ontario. We recognize the tremendous opportunity for economic development and growth in rural Ontario. Our government was elected by the people, for the people, and this includes the people in rural and remote parts of the province.

Ensuring that Ontario is open for business includes ensuring that rural Ontario is open for business. Cutting hydro rates, reducing red tape and regulatory burdens, and scrapping the cap-and-trade carbon tax will all help rural Ontario prosper.

I look forward to hearing from the people at the 2018 International Plowing Match on how we can continue to make changes that work for them.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you very much, Minister, for that answer. I look forward to attending the 2018 International Plowing Match alongside many of my colleagues in the Legislature. Hopefully, I get the opportunity to relive my childhood and can climb back up on the Cockshutt 20.

Mr. Speaker, back to the minister: What kinds of issues can we expect to hear at the International Plowing Match?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I thank the member for the question. As mentioned previously, Ontario is open for business and this includes rural Ontario. The people of Ontario, including our farmers and those in our rural communities, suffered far too long under the previous government where life was unaffordable and families often had to make tough decisions.

This government is committed to working with the people to bring the kinds of changes that work best for them to make life affordable again. Our government is scrapping the cap-and-trade carbon tax, reducing hydro rates, and removing red tape and regulatory burdens that make it harder for business to be competitive.

I believe our farmers produce the best quality food in the world and I'm committed to helping them continue to do so. I've had the opportunity to speak with many of our stakeholders and organizations on these issues and look forward to speaking with them further at the 2018 International Plowing Match this year. Thank you all.

We hope everyone in the Legislature goes there to celebrate with our farming community.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Every time the Premier mentioned transit yesterday, he said something false. Toronto's 45-seat council has a—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to have to ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Put your question.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Council has approved many transit projects. They've opened up a new subway extension. The Eglinton Crosstown is also on its way.

Bill 5 is not about transit or efficiency. In fact, yesterday, the Premier repeatedly confirmed that the real purpose of Bill 5 is to target progressive Toronto councillors, mentioning several of them by name.

Why does the minister think it's justifiable to ignore real transit priorities and take away fundamental human rights just so this Premier can disrupt local democracy to settle personal scores?

Hon. John Yakabuski: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: Thanks to my colleague and, through you, Speaker, thank you to member for that question. What I can't understand is why that member continues to stand up for more politicians, continues to stand up for the deadlock and dysfunction that has plagued Toronto council for years. What we're trying to do, Speaker, is very, very clear. We want to make sure that on October 22, that new council, a streamlined council of 25 that matches the federal and provincial constituencies, is ready to work on making those important decisions, on being able to build transit and fix infrastructure and build affordable housing. I would hope that the member opposite agrees with those principles.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I would love to debate transit in this House, but transit is not this Premier's priority. This Premier has called an emergency session because his real priority is to settle personal scores with Toronto, even if this means disrupting—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, I'm going to ask the members to observe the rule that we do not impute motive.

I would ask the member to put her question.

Ms. Jessica Bell: —even if this means casually invoking the “notwithstanding” clause for the first time in Ontario's history. Why isn't this minister helping riders

with a plan to fund municipal transit operations instead of helping the Premier take away fundamental human rights?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, Speaker, through you to the member opposite: The Premier and our government believe in better local government. We believe in respecting taxpayers' dollars. I reject those comments from that member opposite. I'll put this Premier's record and his words on building transit, building affordable housing, fixing infrastructure in this city—anyone who listens to the Premier knows that he loves his city, knows that he wants to be able to work with council on those very important priorities.

I reject that member's inflammatory words and unparliamentary words. We're standing up for better local government, and Bill 31 stands up for efficient local government.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Mr. Roman Baber: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, section 33 of the Constitution respects a centuries-old principle—a principle common to all British parliamentary systems, including our own. The principle is parliamentary supremacy. That's why, when finalizing the charter, our friends from the Prairies insisted on the inclusion of section 33 in the event that a court exceeds its jurisdiction.

With respect to the court, on Monday the court exceeded its jurisdiction. Speaker, the law is clear: Applications are not designed for findings of fact, and especially not of this magnitude. With respect to the learned judge, finding that a Toronto city councillor cannot effectively represent 110,000 is not just an error of law. It's an error of law and an error of fact in that the court exceeded its jurisdiction. To do so and strike down our government's priority is precisely what the drafters of section 33 had in mind.

Conversely, our government's—

Interjections.

Mr. Roman Baber: Excuse me. Our government's—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'd ask the opposition to come to order.

You've exceeded your time. Response: Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: Thank you, Speaker. Through you to the member for York Centre: Thank you for the question and thank you for standing up for the principles of democracy.

Let me be clear, Speaker. There is only one reason why we introduced this legislation, and that's to fix the dysfunction and political gridlock that has paralyzed city hall. It would be irresponsible to just sit back and watch as council spins its wheels for four more years. We can't afford to let another term go by without those improvements in transit and infrastructure and in affordable housing.

We made a promise to provide better local government for all Ontarians, including Torontonians, and that's a promise we're going to keep.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.
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Mr. Roman Baber: Back to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: Our government's intended use of the clause is entirely lawful since such power is expressly afforded to the government in the charter. To suggest that our action is unlawful is an affront to the Constitution since the Constitution expressly permits it.

Our government campaigned on a clear message: reducing the size of government and making government work better for the people. Toronto is the economic engine of this province and this country. For the people of York Centre in north Toronto, building infrastructure and building subways, subways, subways is a priority. They expect this government to make use of every lawful measure available on these priorities, a measure that is expressly provided for in the charter.

Could the minister kindly explain why it is so important to respond to this week's court ruling by passing Bill 31?

Hon. Steve Clark: Thank you for the supplementary. The member is right: The NDP is the only voice in Ontario that is calling for more politicians. The Better Local Government Act aligned municipal ward boundaries with the federal and provincial ridings. It gave Toronto 25 MPs, 25 MPPs and 25 city councillors. The system works well in Ottawa. It works well here, with all due respect, at Queen's Park. A streamlined council is more efficient, but it's also less expensive. Reducing the size of Toronto council from 47 councillors to 25 members saves at least \$25 million over the next four years.

Speaker, our priorities are simple. Here's what we want to give to Ontarians: affordable, accountable, effective and efficient government. That's what we're going to provide.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: My question is for the Minister of Finance. We all have been called back to the Legislature for an emergency sitting, but instead of actually debating issues that the people of Ontario expect us to tackle, this government is taking the unprecedented step of invoking the "notwithstanding" clause to trample on our charter rights.

Does the minister believe that trampling on the charter rights of Torontonians is a more urgent issue than lowering auto insurance rates so that Ontarians aren't paying \$4 billion more in premiums than drivers in the rest of the country?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, through you, Speaker, to the member: Our government's position is that this legislation is a valid exercise of our provincial jurisdiction over municipalities. We've said very clearly throughout the entire campaign that we want to reduce the size and cost of government. We want to have an efficient, accountable and effective government. On October 22—listen, time is of the essence. October 22 is fast approaching. We want to have that fast, efficient and streamlined council ready for

that election. With Bill 31, that's exactly what we're trying to accomplish.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Back to the minister: Residents in my riding of Humber River–Black Creek pay sky-high auto insurance rates because the government continues to allow insurers to charge drivers higher premiums based on what neighbourhood they live in. When I go door to door and talk to my constituents about unfair auto insurance premiums, that is at the top of their list of concerns they expect this government to deal with, not unilaterally cutting Toronto city council.

Minister, why is violating Torontonians' charter rights a higher priority than ending unfair neighbourhood discrimination in the setting of auto insurance premiums?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again to the member, I can't understand how this member could stand in this place and allow four more years of deadlock and dysfunction at Toronto city council. I can't understand that.

We made it very, very clear, Speaker—I'm trying to get this in the calmest possible way for the member to understand—that a 25-member council that has the same boundaries as the federal MPs, as the provincial MPPs is going to provide that streamlined council so they can make those important decisions. The Premier and I are on the same page. Our government is on the same page. We want to give them the tools to do that.

October 22 is fast approaching. Why doesn't the member agree that it's well within our rights as a provincial jurisdiction to deal with this bill, to have it passed for the municipalities and to actually provide some certainty for Toronto city council?

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Ma question est pour la procureure générale. Government has a duty to act responsibly. Has the Attorney General considered that she could lose her appeal of Justice Belobaba, not only on freedom of expression grounds but also on the other violations that were alleged that cannot be obliterated by the "notwithstanding" clause? With the prospect of an unconstitutional city council sitting in Toronto, has she considered that Bill 31's use of the "notwithstanding" clause in an ill-advised way, in a retroactive way—which she cannot do. Has she considered that Bill 31 raises other legal uncertainties because it uses the "notwithstanding" clause in the context of democratic rights? Has she considered all the legal challenges that are about to be unleashed against Bill 31?

Does she believe that costly legal battles and legal uncertainty are good for Ontario?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I thank the honourable member for her question. We are using the charter, as I said, to uphold the Constitution. The people of Ontario are well within their rights to bring legal challenges to the government. It is my ministry's job to defend the government in those instances.

I cannot speculate on what future litigation will come, but I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that we believe that the Legislature's decision to reduce the size of Toronto city council and bring voter parity to Toronto is constitutional and does not violate the charter. That is why our government has appealed the ruling and is seeking a stay of the Superior Court decision. We will await the result of the appeal.

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Supplementary?

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Monsieur le Président, when a government—any government—intervenes in an election, no matter what election, it rightfully raises significant concerns. Elsewhere in the world, this leads to questions of whether the government is changing the rules to pick a winner, to eliminate adversaries or to distort voter preferences. That's why people are concerned and that's why legal challenges are to be expected.

We know officials that are elected under a cloud of illegitimacy, under a cloud raised by the fact that violations of rights have been found—and the “notwithstanding” clause confirms that, indeed, violations of rights have been found. They will be elected under a cloud of legal doubt, marred by controversies. Does she believe that this is a service to Toronto, to elect people who will be efficient, but who will continue to operate in an illegitimate fashion?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, we are using the legal tools at our disposal to provide the certainty that the people of the city of Toronto need with respect to their election. Section 33 of the charter confirms the paramountcy of Legislatures to decide matters within their jurisdiction. It is a tool that recognizes the long-standing principle that Canada is a parliamentary democracy.

The purpose of section 33 is to provide a mechanism so that where there is a disagreement between a judge and a Legislature surrounding the constitutionality of a law, the people get the final say. As with all exercises of parliamentary power, the ramifications of our decision will occur at the ballot box, and that is a principle of parliamentary democracy.

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NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: My question is for the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines. Our government for the people made it very clear during the election that we are committed to improving health care systems by increasing investments in critical services across our province, including in rural and remote regions.

I know that the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund is a great tool that our government is using to effect real change in northern regions. Can the minister please provide the members with an update on a new project that is going to improve the lives of northern Ontarians?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I thank the member from Ottawa West–Nepean for his important question. I thank the

Premier for his leadership, and the Minister of Health. As the minister responsible for the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund, but perhaps more importantly as a former nurse who has worked extensively in northern Ontario, I have a deep appreciation for the needs, the issues, but more importantly the opportunities that we have to improve access to quality health care services.

That's why the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund has responded. I'm pleased to announce that we'll be providing more than \$1.5 million in resources for the Nipissing and Parry Sound districts to build a new palliative care facility. This goes to one of our core commitments: to improve health care services across Ontario, but importantly for northern Ontario, at an important and critical time in the lives of people, patients and their families.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you to the minister for his leadership on this important file. We know that end-of-life care and decisions are an extremely difficult time for individuals and their families. I am proud that the government is taking a leadership role in investing in end-of-life and hospice care through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund.

Can the minister explain the impacts of this investment on the lives of local residents in the Nipissing area and their families?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you to the minister and the member from Ottawa West–Nepean. This investment of \$1.5 million to help build this new palliative care facility in Nipissing will have a huge impact for the people in the area. Once built, the Nipissing Serenity Hospice will be a home away from home, helping those who need it most, those who are facing the most difficult path of end-of-life care. It will be a caring and supportive environment where friends and families can receive the dignity, compassion and quality of care they deserve in their final days.

Through this investment, our government reaffirms its commitment to building a health care system that works for patients and their families. Our government has committed to improving all the lives of the people in every corner of our great province. That is a promise made by Premier Ford and a promise kept.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Mr. Chris Glover: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Yesterday this government introduced a bill that invokes the “notwithstanding” clause. We are spending time and resources on a bill that violates our fundamental charter rights, including the rights of Ontarians to fundamental freedoms, and legal rights including our right to life, liberty and security of the person; our right to be secure against unreasonable search and seizure; and our right not to be arbitrarily detained or imprisoned.

He is suspending our rights, as the Premier freely admits, just so he can settle his score with Mike Layton and Joe Cressy. Speaker, does the minister—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, I'm going to remind all members and ask them not to impute motive in their questions.

Please put your question.

Mr. Chris Glover: Withdrawn, Mr. Speaker.

Does the minister believe that violating the charter rights of Torontonians is a more pressing issue than working on gun violence and poverty in this city?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I refer the matter to the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to thank my colleague, Speaker, and I also want to thank you for your work in dealing with the tone and some of the unparliamentary language that I'm hearing from the opposition.

Our government has introduced the Efficient Local Government Act and also invoked section 33 of the charter to ensure that the city of Toronto's wards and the number of councillors can be aligned to 25 prior to the October 22 election. It's very important for us to put that forward as a bill at the earliest possible convenience. As you know, the Premier made a commitment to recall this Legislature because time is of the essence. The October 22 election is fast approaching and we need to have this bill on the order paper in order to provide that streamlined council to make those very important decisions.

Again, the member can have inflammatory rhetoric and take potshots at my Premier and our government, but let's get to the reason that we are here. We're here to deal with efficient local government.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Chris Glover: Mr. Speaker, I don't blame the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for not standing up to defend his government. I hope he has the guts not to stand up to vote to suspend our rights when this bill comes to a vote.

We should be working in this House on issues like affordable housing and child care, and on public transit in the city. We should be working on the fact that Toronto is the child poverty capital of Canada. We need to change that. That's what we should be working on. We should not be working on a bill—there is no urgency to pass this bill to suspend the rights of the people of this city and of this province.

Minister, will you be supporting this bill?

Hon. Steve Clark: I introduced the bill yesterday, so I am going to be supporting the bill.

Speaker, again, through you to the member: I just want to put this into perspective. Toronto city council is meeting right now. With all due respect to his first question, rather than having a meeting at Toronto city hall to match the \$25 million that we've put into guns and gangs, or rather than having a discussion about building affordable housing or building transit, again we're having the same debate at city hall today where we're going around and around and around arguing about the number of politicians.

There are important decisions that Toronto city council could be making to work with our government on those important issues. Instead, they're having that circular

debate over and over again. It's unproductive. We're talking about efficient local government—government that's accountable to the people, that makes those important decisions that help the residents.

TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Speaker, as you and many of us in this chamber know, the Toronto International Film Festival is one of the largest public film festivals in the world. It is imperative to film lovers, the film industry and Ontario's economy. TIFF welcomes stars and film industry personnel from around the world. It also showcases Ontario to global film and television as a great place to invest in.

Can the minister inform the House how TIFF contributes to the cultural fabric of Toronto and Ontario?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you for the question from my colleague from Mississauga East–Cooksville. TIFF is important and it is an economic driver.

Each September, the world comes to Toronto for a celebration of the best in Canadian and international film. TIFF has become one of the most prestigious and respected international film festivals: 10 days when the world comes to our city to be immersed in film, creativity and culture. TIFF strengthens Ontario's economy, creates jobs and reinforces that Ontario is a leader in film production. Congratulations to the filmmakers, the actors and the writers who have enjoyed success at TIFF this year.

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I also want to acknowledge the important role that event sponsors, volunteers and TIFF staff under the leadership of Piers Handling have in TIFF's success. There is no doubt that TIFF is a cultural, tourist and economic success.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: I'd like to thank the minister very much for that answer. Being in Toronto during TIFF has certainly opened my eyes to precisely how important this festival is to the city, both as an economic driver and a cultural staple. However, I'm sure there are many asking themselves how the film industry impacts their local economy.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, can the minister let us know what economic impacts the film and television industry has across the province of Ontario?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The economic impact from the domestic film and television markets on Ontario's economy has been unbelievably positive. Sudbury alone has seen over 90 films and TV series shot there since 2012, with more investment coming in. Ottawa has seen movies like *Batman and Robin*, *Penthouse North*, *Sacrifice*, and *The Blackcoat's Daughter*, which premiered at TIFF in 2015.

In one year, film and television production contributed \$3 billion to Ontario's economy and supported 54,000 jobs. We expect to see this number increase as investment continues to grow and our government makes Ontario's

economy more competitive. Just this week, I toured the Cinespace Kipling studio campus in Etobicoke, the largest of its kind in Canada, with the capacity to host six large TV projects at one time. They are expanding.

Under Premier Ford's leadership, Ontario—

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

Next question.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: My question is for the Premier. We all have been called back to the Legislature for this emergency sitting, but instead of actually debating issues that the people of Ontario expect us to tackle, this government is taking the unprecedented step of invoking the “notwithstanding” clause to trample on the rights of the people of Toronto. This government has a Toronto obsession. They are ignoring the issues facing northern and rural Ontario.

Does the Premier believe trampling on the charter rights of Torontonians is a more urgent issue than making sure the children of Kashechewan have a safe school to attend?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I'll tell you what the Premier is concerned about. The Premier is concerned about creating good-paying jobs, getting this city moving, getting transit moving, stopping the guns and gangs. I'll tell you, my friends, I find it ironic that the city of Toronto is meeting today, because I personally asked the mayor to call a special meeting for guns and gangs. We handed \$25 million over to the police. The mayor refused to call the meeting. But when it comes down to saving all the little politicians down at the city of Toronto, they called a meeting instantly.

They are getting their priorities mixed up. We need to get the city moving again and we will get the city moving again.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Back to the Premier: The community of Kashechewan ordered their school closed because of the repair backlog. There is chronic water damage. The walls grow hot but the fire alarms don't work. Children are getting lung infections and pneumonia from the mould. I toured the community, Speaker. I saw it with my own eyes.

What tops the list of concerns of my constituents is making sure their children don't lose an entire school year because their school is falling apart, not unilaterally cutting Toronto city council.

Premier, why is violating Toronto's charter rights a higher priority than getting the kids of Kashechewan into a safe school they can learn in?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, to my colleague: Maybe if the Liberal government didn't waste billions and billions of dollars, the schools wouldn't be in the shape they're in right now.

That is what our motive is. Our motive is to turn this province around, save the taxpayers money, until we can fix the schools, build new hospitals, and make sure we get the economy going; to stimulate the economy by putting

money back into the people's pockets, unlike the NDP, that wants to raise taxes, waste billions of dollars, increase the carbon tax, \$2-a-litre gasoline, the highest hydro rates in North America. All you want to do is tax to death the taxpayers of this great province—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Start the clock. Next question.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Norman Miller: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Our government was elected with a mandate to improve public safety across our province and to provide the brave men and women of our police services with the tools and resources they need to perform their duties safely and effectively.

Policing infrastructure has been ignored the last 15 years. As a result, a growing number of OPP detachments across Ontario, like the one in Parry Sound, have exceeded their useful life cycle and require replacement due to health and safety concerns.

Could the minister please update the members of this Legislature on how his ministry is addressing the aging community safety infrastructure in this province?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I'd like to thank the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka for the question.

As you know, during the election campaign we made a promise to all Ontarians that we would improve public safety in this great province and provide Ontario police forces with the tools and resources they require to do their jobs. In effect, I'm very proud to say that that's exactly what we're doing.

We made an announcement previously about the \$25 million that was going to be advanced to the city of Toronto. I'm proud to report to the members of the Legislature that our government is keeping its promise and showing its leadership. We are going to invest \$182 million in replacing aging OPP detachments so that communities can continue to receive modern, cost-efficient and high-quality services throughout the province of Ontario and deliver essential public safety.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Norman Miller: Thank you, Minister, for the response.

Mr. Speaker, as a member of this government, I'm proud that we're keeping our promise of making community safety a true priority all across this province. Many of the new OPP detachments will be in northern Ontario, an area that was largely ignored by the last government.

Will the minister please explain how these new OPP detachments will improve public safety across northern Ontario?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I would like to defer that question to the Minister of Energy, northern affairs, mines and Indigenous people.

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for his advocacy there in Parry Sound. I want to thank the Premier and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for their commitment to northern Ontario and the kinds of assets we need to offer modern facilities to Ontario's finest.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I had one of my finest moments in my political career when I stood shoulder to shoulder with Chief Superintendent David Lucas, Inspector Nathan Schmidt and several members of the OPP in the beautiful town of Fort Frances to announce a new OPP facility. This will offer improved amenities, and address appropriate workplace health and safety issues. It will get rid of obsolete design and technologies and a lack of overall space, and, more importantly, offer a place to engage our communities.

1130

These guys do great work in vast regions of our province. We're proud of them. We're proud for this opportunity and for—

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

CURRICULUM

Ms. Jill Andrew: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Education. Children have been back to school for over a week. This government has left teachers with a dangerously outdated 1998 curriculum, which fails to teach kids how to keep themselves safe in today's society. These are the issues Ontarians expect their government to deal with, but instead, the Premier has called us here to force through this unprecedented, anti-democratic legislation.

Does the Minister of Education believe that violating the rights and freedoms of Toronto voters is more important than finally giving teachers the material they desperately need to keep our children safe?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: Our position is that we're well within our legislative rights, as a democracy, as a government that received 2.3 million votes in the June 7 election, to place a mandate before the table.

Yesterday, after the Premier recalled the Legislature, we tabled a very urgent priority for this government, the Efficient Local Government Act. We believe that's a bill that this Legislature needs to deal with forthwith. There are many, many priorities that this government has in our province, but because there is an October 22 election, there's a bit of urgency. We need to have this bill go through the legislative process as fast as possible. We need to have a council at city hall that's not arguing about the amount of politicians, but actually arguing about the important issues that are facing Torontonians. That's exactly—

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: Back to the Minister of Education, and I hope she can answer her own question this time.

The 1998 curriculum that this government has recklessly forced back into classrooms doesn't even include the word "consent," let alone a lesson on it. Our children's safety is urgent. Our children's health and well-being is critical. Why does the Minister of Education think it is more urgent to trample on the fundamental rights and freedoms of my constituents than to provide our teachers with a curriculum that, again, will keep the students safe?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Take your seats.
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, Speaker, the decision on Monday of the justice—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Why did you guys all come back?

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for St. Paul's, come to order. Member for Hamilton Mountain, come to order.

Mr. Paul Miller: Will the real minister please stand up?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, come to order.

Interjection.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government side, come to order. The Premier, come to order.

Minister.

Hon. Steve Clark: Thank you, Speaker. This government has lots of priorities; however, the justice's decision on Monday has precipitated a recall of the Legislature and the Efficient Local Government Act to be tabled yesterday.

You know, Speaker, I think I understand where the NDP are coming from. Based on what I've heard in this Legislature and out in the community, I don't think they actually want new, affordable housing built in Toronto. I don't think they want infrastructure to be worked on with our government and Toronto city council. I don't think they want new transit. You know what, Speaker? I think they should rename themselves the "no development party."

INVESTMENT REGULATIONS

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to be able to stand here and speak.

My question is to the Minister of Finance. Today, the Ontario Securities Commission published proposed amendments to investment regulations that would ban embedded commissions in the sale of certain investment

vehicles. I am concerned that if these proposed amendments are implemented, the Ontario Securities Commission will discontinue a payment option for purchasing mutual funds that has enabled Ontario families and investors to save toward retirement and other financial goals.

Can the minister please explain to this House why the Ontario Securities Commission is taking these steps and how our government will respond?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, the proposed amendments the member is referring to result from a process initiated under the previous Liberal government. The member is indeed correct: The proposed changes would make it more difficult for Ontario families and investors to save towards their financial goals.

We want to be clear: Our government does not agree with the proposal as it is currently drafted.

Premier Ford's government is committed to making Ontario a competitive place to invest, grow and create jobs. We made a promise to the people of Ontario, and that's a promise we intend to keep. We have said it many times and we'll repeat it again today: We want the world to know that Ontario is open for business.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: Thank you to the minister for his answer.

Speaker, I am pleased to hear that our government does not support the proposal by the Ontario Securities Commission as it is currently drafted. It is important to me and to all members of this House that we ensure Ontario is open for business.

I'm sure the minister will agree that it is essential for Ontario to grow our capital markets while ensuring strong investor protections.

Could the minister please explain how he plans to work towards making Ontario a competitive place to invest?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you again to the member from Cambridge for the question.

Let me assure you that we are absolutely committed to making Ontario the attractive place to invest and do business. That is why we will continue to work with other provinces, territories and stakeholders to explore potential alternatives outside of the measures of the Ontario Securities Commission's proposal.

We must do everything we can to ensure fair and efficient capital markets, alongside strong investor protections. In doing so, we will continue to allow people across Ontario to save toward retirement and their other financial goals. It is critical that we give the hard-working people of Ontario every opportunity to have their money work for them.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Mushkegowuk–James Bay has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Premier concerning unsafe school conditions. This matter will be debated on Wednesday at 6 p.m.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just on a very quick point of order: Earlier you ruled one of our members out of order for imputing motive under standing order 23. I understand that, and we are doing everything we can to make sure we adhere, but I ask that you do the same to the Premier, because time and time again he stands in this House and he imputes motive of the opposition. I would ask you to hold him to account for his actions and those of his minister, who does the same.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I will acknowledge the member's point of order and reiterate once again—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Transportation, come to order—to all members of the House that it is inappropriate to impute motive in your questions, in your statements, in your preambles. I would ask all members to think about that and do it.

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

The House recessed from 1140 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Good afternoon. I'm pleased to introduce one of my constituents from Guelph, Ryan Bannon, who is here in the members' gallery visiting Queen's Park. Welcome to Queen's Park, Ryan.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It's my pleasure to welcome today a terrific person who is working with me: Jordan Chevalier. I believe he is just behind you there, Speaker. I'd like to welcome him as my executive assistant here at Queen's Park.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I'd like to introduce my very good friend and successful businessman from Brampton Manu Dutta, and his friend from India Mr. Vikas Sekhri; and Mr. Manohar Singh from California. Welcome to the Legislature.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Ms. Jessica Bell: Monday was an emotional roller coaster for democratically minded people across Toronto. First, Ontario's Superior Court Justice Edward Belobaba ruled that the Conservative government's move to slash Toronto's city council while the election was already under way has "substantially interfered with both the candidate's and the voter's right to freedom of expression as guaranteed under ... the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms." People rejoiced that their election would no longer be thrown into chaos. Then, to the shock of nearly everybody, Premier Ford announced that he would be

invoking the “notwithstanding” clause to overrule the court’s decision. Doug Ford also intends to continue to use this power and this clause should any charter ruling be used to stop his vindictive whims.

This is the first time in Ontario’s history that any Premier has ever—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I’m going to interrupt the member. Again, we have to call the Premier by the name “Premier,” not by his personal name—same thing with the cabinet ministers, same for everybody—and their ridings.

Continue.

Ms. Jessica Bell: This is the first time in Ontario’s history that any Premier has ever tried to use this clause. It is shocking that other members of his caucus, such as the Attorney General, are not only failing to stop him but are actually enabling this power grab.

Doug Ford—the Premier—has violated the rights of Torontonians. The size of Toronto city council is a decision for the people of Toronto. This election belongs to the people of Toronto. We do not support the use of section 33 nor do we support any plan by the Premier to use public money to fund an appeal of the court’s ruling.

JEWISH HIGH HOLY DAYS

Mrs. Gila Martow: We’re in the High Holy Days period for the Jewish community. It’s High Holy—H-O-L-Y—and then a separate word, “Days,” not “holidays,” which is what most people say, because it sounds like “holidays.”

It’s actually a serious time. It’s a time to really reflect on the past year and to think about the next year. In the Jewish community, we understand that people are imperfect and that we can always do better. It’s a serious time of year but yet a celebration. We dip apples in honey—or bread in honey, if there are no apples around wherever you are—to wish each other a sweet new year.

I want to wish everybody here in the Legislature a meaningful year, a prosperous year and a year where you accomplish—we set some goals. We all have our own personal goals, perhaps in our ridings or perhaps something that we care about or a reason why we wanted to be elected, and then we have goals that we’re working on with the rest of our teams.

Now, we’ve just had Rosh Hashanah, which literally means “head of the year.” It’s not commonly called the Jewish New Year. This is the year of 5779 in the Hebrew calendar. It’s a big number, and if we reflect on it, we realize how long the Jewish community has been around and has been at the forefront of a lot of our laws. A lot of our legal systems are based on ancient, ancient Jewish efforts.

Shana Tova, everybody, and Shana Tova Umetukah.

SARAH DOUCETTE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I rise in the House today to talk about a phenomenal woman. Her name is Sarah

Doucette and she is my local city councillor for Ward 13 in Parkdale–High Park.

Sarah has represented our community at Toronto city council for the last eight years. So much of what we love about our community is thanks to Sarah’s hard work. She saved our beloved High Park Zoo from closing. She brought our community together and rebuilt Jamie Bell park when it was destroyed by arson. She defended our public libraries from cuts. She protected our trees in the neighbourhoods. She has worked to preserve our city’s heritage. She did all of this and so much more.

We all know how important it is to have a strong local councillor. From my experience, I can tell you that Sarah knows how to do her job very well and, more importantly, she always puts the concerns and the needs of our community at the heart of all of her work. It is a real loss to Parkdale–High Park and to our city that a strong, hard-working councillor like Sarah, who has delivered results for our community, is not seeking re-election in a 25-ward race. As another Parkdale–High Park councillor said, “It’s a crime that we’re losing her.”

Sarah, we love you. Thank you for everything that you have done for us. We are so proud that you represented us so well at city hall for the last eight years.

EVENTS IN MISSISSAUGA

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Today I am really excited about showcasing Mississauga, the city that I’ve loved for the last 15 or 16 years.

Summer has come to an end, students have gone back to school, and I am wondering how long I will have before retiring my barbeque for the summer.

Looking back, the residents of Mississauga hosted many events, from small to the largest in Ontario, in celebrating cultural diversity. Just in August I took part in Pakistan, India, and Ukraine Independence Day celebrations; Sri Lankan Friendship Cricket Cup matches; an Ontario 55+ Games ceremony; a multitude of multicultural festivals, ranging from a few hundred to a few thousand; art festivals; Italian, Filipino, Latin and Polish festivals; and MuslimFest, where our Premier made an appearance in front of thousands of guests celebrating various cultures from many parts of the world and Islamic art.

Mississauga is known for its diversity and we know how to celebrate it.

CANADIAN CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Today I rise to speak as the anti-racism critic for the official opposition. In this role, I am tasked with keeping an eye on the ways that the system is used to imbed inequity into law and practice.

Over the course of the last two days, since the Premier invoked the “notwithstanding” clause which suspends our charter rights, I’ve received over 200 emails from Kitchener Centre residents asking me to speak out against this abuse of power. His vow to invoke this clause whenever he disagrees with the judiciary, and I quote from

a Kitchener Centre resident, “would establish a very dangerous precedent, and I am concerned about the effects on our province’s democracy.”

The reason that the official opposition keeps emphasizing the gravity of this decision is that the suspension of our constitutionally protected charter rights has historically led to the attempt to imbed injustice into law and normalize it in practice. Historically, governments have invoked this clause to attack the most marginalized among us. For example, under a Conservative government in Alberta, this clause was invoked in Bill 26 to limit financial damages a person could receive from the government after a woman successfully sued for being part of a eugenics project. It was later invoked by the PC government in Alberta as an attempt to block same-sex marriage.

So I ask the government this: If slavery was legal in Ontario today, would it be just to engage in the slave trade or would it be right to make a change?

1310

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I want to first begin by thanking the many brave and vocal citizens who joined us here today and yesterday—those in this chamber, out front on the lawn of the Legislature, at city hall in the square—to ensure that their voices were heard in opposition to Bill 31 and the immoral use of the “notwithstanding” clause. It’s clear to me that people understand that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms represents deep meaning in Ontario. Ontarians are waking up to the harsh realities of this Premier and his government.

Why should Torontonians have less? Why should Toronto be singled out? The Premier is doubling down on his decision, despite the ruling and despite five years of consultations that led to the 47-seat-council decision.

The Premier and his Conservatives are attempting to divide our great city, a move that I and my constituents in Scarborough–Guildwood feel is deeply damaging for the city of Toronto. I’ve received hundreds of emails to this effect. What I’m hearing from the people of Scarborough is that their trust has been broken—people like Jane, who wrote to say, “These are the tactics and the words of a bully. A bully who seeks to divide rather than bring people together.”

KLEINBURG BINDER TWINE FESTIVAL

Mr. Stephen Lecce: Rich history and our cultural heritage live on in the village of Kleinburg in the city of Vaughan at the annual Binder Twine Festival.

The roots of this festival began in the 1800s when farmers came into the village to buy twine to bind their wheat together. In 1967, the year of our centennial, a small committee revived the concept, after a hiatus, as Kleinburg’s centennial project. That included the late Pierre Berton, who proudly hailed from the village of Kleinburg. Today, it continues on as a festival that brings thousands of people together, showcasing the incredible talent of our artisans, our small business people and our entrepreneurs.

I want to thank the hundreds of volunteers from the riding of King–Vaughan and across the GTA who contribute to this festival and the strength and value it represents in contributing to our community and our heritage. I’m encouraging all residents of the GTA to join me this Saturday in Kleinburg for this wonderful opportunity to come together in support of many local charities, including the development of the Vaughan hospital.

I’m reminded of a quote by Mr. Berton, who said, “We still seek the countryside with nostalgia, affection and longing.” Hope to see you this Saturday.

GOVERNMENT’S RECORD

Ms. Marit Stiles: I rise in the House today because Ontario is facing urgent challenges, the impacts of which I see every day in my riding of Davenport. I see it with seniors who simply can’t afford or find adequate housing, in young people who can’t find steady work, and in children studying in schools so badly in need of repairs that they are literally crumbling around them. I see the impacts in the overcrowded streetcars, buses and subways where riders wedge themselves in just to make it to work on time, and I see it in the rising death toll from the ongoing opioid emergency ravaging our communities.

Instead of taking on these challenges, this government is taking things from bad to worse with cuts to school repair funding and mental health funding and the outright cancellation of programs that would prevent opioid overdoses. But most egregious is the fact that the government has allowed the Premier’s obsession with Toronto’s municipal elections to consume the business of this House to the point that we are now debating the very suspension of Ontarians’ charter rights in order to make it happen.

I am deeply proud that our official opposition caucus has said no to this clear abuse of power, and on behalf of the people of Davenport and all Ontarians, we will continue to do whatever we can to safeguard our democratic institutions, uphold the rule of law and protect our fundamental rights.

SKILLED TRADES

Ms. Jill Dunlop: Earlier this week, at the invite of Brian Elliott, VP of field operations for Delta Elevator, I visited the Whitby campus of Durham College to learn about their skilled trades programs. I was hosted by Don Lovisa, president of Durham College; Kevin Baker, dean of the School of Skilled Trades, Apprenticeship and Renewable Technology; and their teams. I learned the following:

The college’s post-secondary enrolment in skilled trades has grown 359% in the last 10 years. Apprenticeship enrolment at Durham College is, unfortunately, unchanged from 2011 to today. The college is performing over capacity, with 1,445 students enrolled in skilled trades, 1,300 apprentices and 150 youth apprentices.

The elevating devices mechanic program has a wait-list of 200 apprentices. This is a five-year backlog. A fully

licensed elevator mechanic can start by earning \$115,000 per year.

One of Durham College's industry partners has recently forecast a shortage of approximately 3,000 skilled labour people.

This visit was very informative. It was exciting to experience the attitudes, activity and engagement of the students, especially in the first week back to school.

As we execute our plan to make Ontario open for business, it is important that we ensure the availability of skilled labour to drive business growth.

ATS AUTOMATION TOOLING SYSTEMS

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: Yesterday, Cambridge-based ATS Automation Tooling Systems Inc., an industry-leading automation solutions provider, and Bruce Power celebrated the grand opening of the major component replacement—MCR—integration testing facility on the ATS Cambridge campus. Organizations such as ATS and Bruce Power are helping to spur innovation and economic growth benefiting all of Ontario.

This year, ATS is celebrating 40 years of being a meaningful part of many local families' lives, providing highly skilled employment opportunities while benefiting from the depth and breadth of the talent in the Cambridge-Waterloo region.

Meanwhile, Bruce Power is Canada's only private sector nuclear generator and the largest operating nuclear facility in the world. They produce 6,400 megawatts of affordable electricity daily, providing 30% of Ontario's electricity at 30% less than the average cost to produce residential power.

Bruce Power's ongoing operations and MCR project will support 22,000 direct and indirect jobs annually and provide \$4 billion in annual domestic economic benefit through direct and indirect spending on equipment, supplies, materials and labour income in Ontario. At the same time, the Bruce Power supply chain acquires 90% of its goods and services in Ontario, creating good jobs right here at home.

Partnerships such as these between ATS and Bruce Power are innovating and creating jobs throughout the province and creating made-in-Ontario solutions for major infrastructure projects. This joint facility attests to Ontario's future-looking innovation, which has always been a hallmark of the Cambridge community. I'm proud to bring this announcement into the House and demonstrate the strong work of Ontario businesses.

PETITIONS

CELIAC DISEASE

Mr. Joel Harden: I have a petition that I'd like to introduce to the House from the Canadian Celiac Association.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the IgA TTG blood screening is the internationally recognized standard as the first step in diagnosing a person with celiac disease;

"Whereas celiac disease is an autoimmune disease that can strike people with a genetic predisposition at any time of life and presents with a large variety of non-specific signs and symptoms;

"Whereas many individuals, such as family members of diagnosed celiacs, are at higher risk and pre-symptomatic screening is advised;

"Whereas covering the cost of the simple test would dramatically reduce wait times to diagnosis, save millions to the health care system due to misdiagnoses, unnecessary testing and serious complications from untreated celiac disease and reduce the painful suffering and health decline of thousands of individuals;

"Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not to cover this blood test;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario government to cover the cost of the diagnostic blood test (IgA TTG) for celiac disease for those who show symptoms, are a first-degree relative or have an associated condition."

I want to thank Jacqueline Lajoie from Embrun, Ontario, for giving me this petition. I'm going to affix my name to it and give it to page Gopi to offer to the Clerks' table.

1320

WEARING OF POPPIES

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank the veterans and legionnaires of Branch 211 of the Royal Canadian Legion in Bruce Mines for the following petition:

"I Wear My Poppy with Pride and Respect.

"Whereas the poppy is a powerful symbol of remembrance worn by millions the world over with great respect and gratitude for those who made the ultimate sacrifice to protect peace and freedom for all people;

"Whereas the poppy has been the principal emblem of the Royal Canadian Legion since its inception in 1925;

"Whereas the poppy is an enduring symbol of sacrifice that was initially inspired by the Canadian poet and soldier John McCrae while in the trenches in the Second Battle of Ypres, Belgium, during World War I;

"Whereas the use or reference to the universal poppy symbol for purposes other than remembrance and respect for fallen servicemen and -women and peacekeepers worldwide may be offensive and disrespectful in the minds of their family, friends and comrades;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to: educate and promote the poppy as a universal symbol of remembrance and sacrifice, and that its heritage and origin from Canadian roots be highlighted. With this positive focus and purpose in mind,

"We further petition LAO to demonstrate leadership in this endeavour by exemplifying respect and pride in the poppy symbol when referred to by members of the

Legislative Assembly of Ontario and provincial political parties.”

I fully agree with this petition, put my name to it and present it to page Omolola to bring down to the Clerks’ table.

CURRICULUM

Ms. Marit Stiles: It’s my pleasure to present this petition entitled “Protecting Children: Forward, Not Backward, on Sex Ed.”

“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 (STIs) pose serious risks to the safety and well-being of young people;

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

“Whereas one in five parents reported their own child being a victim of cyberbullying; and

“Whereas Doug Ford and the Conservative government is dragging Ontario backward, requiring students to learn an outdated sex ed curriculum that excludes information about consent, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexting, 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.”

This petition was presented to me at a rally that was organized here at Queen’s Park on August 30 by a young man named Mason and his mother, who pulled it together in just two days. They presented me with 110 signatures. I’m very proud to affix my own signature. I’ll hand it off to Gopi to table this petition.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: This petition is entitled “Reverse Doug Ford’s Cuts to Low-Income Families.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Doug Ford eliminated the Basic Income Pilot project and slashed the new social assistance rates by 1.5%, and did so without warning;

“Whereas cuts to already-meagre social assistance rates will disproportionately impact children, those with mental health challenges, persons with disabilities, and people struggling in poverty;

“Whereas the decision to cancel the Basic Income Pilot project was made without any evidence, and leaves thousands of Ontarians without details about whether they will be able to access other forms of income assistance;

“Whereas the independently authored Income Security: A Roadmap for Change report, presented to the government last fall, recommends both increases to rates and the continuation of the Basic Income Pilot project as key steps towards income adequacy and poverty reduction;

“Whereas the failure to address poverty—and the homelessness, hunger, health crises, and desperation that can result from poverty—hurts people, families and Ontario’s communities;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately reverse Doug Ford’s callous decision to slash increases to social assistance rates by 50%, and reverse his decision to cancel the Basic Income Pilot project, decisions that will undoubtedly hurt thousands of vulnerable people and drag Ontario backwards when it comes to homelessness reduction and anti-poverty efforts.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and give it to page Omolola.

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is from the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition because I believe workers’ compensation is a right, and I will be affixing my signature to it.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Suze Morrison: I have a petition that I would like to present, related to affordable housing. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas for families throughout much of Ontario, owning a home they can afford remains a dream, while renting is painfully expensive;

“Whereas consecutive Conservative and Liberal governments have sat idle, while housing costs spiralled out of control, speculators made fortunes, and too many families had to put their hopes on hold;

“Whereas every Ontarian should have access to safe, affordable housing. Whether a family wants to rent or own, live in a house, an apartment, a condominium or a co-op, they should have affordable options;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately prioritize the repair of Ontario’s social housing stock, commit to building new affordable homes, crack down on housing speculators, and make rentals more affordable through rent controls and updated legislation.”

I thoroughly support this petition. I will be affixing my signature to it and providing it to page Omolola to deliver to the Clerks.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mr. Patrick Beaudry from Hanmer in my riding for this petition. It reads as follows:

“Gas prices....

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

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

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

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

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

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

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

CELIAC DISEASE

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: This petition is with regard to celiac disease testing.

“Whereas the IgA TTG blood screening is the internationally recognized standard as the first step in diagnosing a person with celiac disease;

“Whereas celiac disease is an autoimmune disease that can strike people with a genetic predisposition at any time of life and presents with a large variety of non-specific signs and symptoms;

“Whereas many individuals, such as family members of diagnosed celiacs, are at higher risk and pre-symptomatic screening is advised;

“Whereas covering the cost of the simple test would dramatically reduce wait times to diagnosis, save millions to the health care system due to misdiagnoses, unnecessary testing and serious complications from untreated celiac disease and reduce the painful suffering and health decline of thousands of individuals;

“Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not to cover this blood test;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario government to cover the cost of the diagnostic blood test (IgA TTG) for celiac disease for those who show symptoms, are a first-degree relative or have an associated condition.”

I’m proud to sign this and provide this to page Omolola.

1330

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is from my constituency. It says:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

“—reinstate the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation;

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

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

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

I fully support this petition because reconciliation is not optional, Speaker, and I will affix my signature to it.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: My petition is entitled “Stop Doug Ford from Cutting Mental Health Care.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Doug Ford has announced a \$335-million per year funding cut to mental health care and services;

“Whereas an estimated 12,000 children are waiting up to 18 months for mental health care, and there are 63%

more children in the ER for mental health issues than there were in 2006;

“Whereas a cut to already threadbare mental health funding will mean longer waits for care and fewer services—which can result in mental health conditions being exacerbated, and more people living with mental illness spiralling into crisis;

“Whereas front-line care workers and first responders are doing the best they can, but coping with a shortage of resources;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reverse Doug Ford’s \$330-million per year funding cut to Ontario’s mental health services.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature to it and provide it to page Omolola.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I’m pleased to present this petition that comes from all over my riding.

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

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

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

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

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

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Bill Walker: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should adopt a new symbol featuring a dynamic individual, known universally as the “Modified International Symbol of Access,” and that the new symbol be used when a new accessible parking space is being created or when the sign needs to be replaced.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Bill Walker: I’m honoured and humbled to put forward a motion to update the accessibility symbol in Ontario to a much more modernized, dynamic icon. The intent is to recognize that people with disabilities are engaged and to stop associating disabilities with the image of a stationary person in a wheelchair.

Personally, Madam Speaker, I prefer to recognize people with differing abilities as opposed to using the term “disability.”

Former Lieutenant Governor and Ontario’s accessibility adviser the Honourable David Onley agrees and said the old symbol “is built around a stick figure—not a person, but an ‘it.’ People with disabilities are not objects; they are living, breathing individuals containing within them all that distinguishes a human from an ‘it.’”

I learned about the efforts to bring the modernized icon of accessibility from the co-founders of the Forward Movement, Dylan Itzikowitz and Jonathan Silver. Madam Speaker, it was a very significant day in my life when they came in. Dylan had actually had an accident, and he came in to share this story me. He wanted to take something that happened in his life and find the positive in it. It was very inspiring. I give both him and Jonathan huge credit. Dylan experienced his life suddenly shifted to wheelchair-reliant after he was hit by a drunk driver in North York. But you could tell, even as he came into my office, he wanted to utilize that to make a movement, to make sure that people felt and understood that people with challenges to their abilities could be very dynamic, could be mobile, could be doing lots of things. He truly felt that the old symbol was that static sitting in a wheelchair, not being able to have mobility, not being able to produce and contribute to our great society.

I want to clarify, Madam Speaker, that the Forward Movement isn’t pushing for old symbols to change. The whole intent of this is, if people wish to, they can update and modernize to a more modernized symbol. There’s no added cost because you don’t have to; it’s totally voluntary. But we want to make sure that, wherever we can—other countries have adopted this. Other provinces are looking at it. Other states are looking at this. So we want, again, Ontario to be a leader to recognize that segment of our population with a more modernized symbol, to reflect what they do as well.

As I say, there is no cost. Whether it be the push button on the wall, whether it be something in a parking space, whether it be a symbol that’s affixed in a building, all of those can stay the same because they are relatively similar. They’re the same colour. The only difference is the person’s depiction in the actual symbol. So, if you don’t wish to, you don’t have to. We’re not going to ever legislate that you have to, but we’re hoping that over time people will jump onto this movement and show respect for people, and show that forward movement, which Dylan and Jonathan wanted so much to happen.

The International Symbol of Access is one of the world’s most familiar images, but the static wheelchair represents a world and perceptions from 40 years ago. Again, whenever we can address something like this in our

society, whenever we can be part of a movement to actually show how important they are in our society, we need to jump on top of that.

I want to reiterate: The intent is for the new, modernized, dynamic icon to be used going forward, as their methodology and their slogan says, to reflect a modernized vision of people who are truly active and moving forward, contributing greatly in our communities across our great province of Ontario. As I've said earlier, it's close enough to the old symbol, so if you recognize the old and you see the new, it's close enough that you're not going to start to go, "Well, why would we do this? What does this one mean versus this one?" What I'm saying is, it's just more modern. It's showing the person leaning forward and looking like they're ready to roll as opposed to the static sitting in a wheelchair that was there 40 years ago.

It is certain, to me, that it's symbolic. It is what the people who are in this community want, and they've come to us and asked us to make sure we could try to move forward with this. I am proud to do that.

As I suggest, whether it's a new build, whether it's a new facility, whether it's a new parking lot, whether it's a new street in a town, city or village, utilize that symbol going forward. We won't ever take the old ones away if that's not what a community or an individual or organization wants. We don't want to incur extra costs. We will just continually encourage, and over time, when people see it—I still have the sign in my offices here at Queen's Park. When they come in, it's interesting how they gravitate to it. And then they ask the question, "What's that symbol? Why are you trying to do this?" As soon as you share with them the reasoning, nine out of 10 people are saying, "Absolutely."

The only thing we haven't been able to do is that some people—the one out of 10, if you will—have said, "It's not a perfect symbol. It doesn't reflect all of mobility." That's true. The Honourable Lieutenant Governor Onley had gone out and tried to actually find a symbol that was totally representative of all ability challenges, and there isn't one that can cover all, if you think of the wide variety and wide spectrum of all the ability challenges out there. That's not really what Dylan and Jonathan were trying to accomplish. They truly just wanted to ensure that people viewed people with ability challenges as being progressive, as being ready to roll, and as able to move forward and do great things in our communities.

The modernized graphic shows movement, emphasizing differing abilities. Its background is still blue, but the person in the wheelchair is leaning forward with their arms up behind them, looking to be on the move, rather than sitting still as depicted in the original image created back in 1969.

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In April, I joined the Forward Movement at the Centre for Social Innovation in Toronto, where they launched, before 100 supporters, including StopGap founder Luke Anderson and gold-medal Paralympian Paul Rosen, the new dynamic wheelchair symbol they're hoping Ontario will adopt.

I just want to break here for a second, Madam Speaker, and give a bit of a shout-out to StopGap. So many of you will have seen that here in Toronto. I've certainly seen them out in various communities. Even this summer, actually, I was on the election trail, and I had someone approach me who was in the hospital and also a long-term-care facility, concerned about one of the businesses in Warton. It was a pharmacy—obviously, lots of our old towns were built at a different time—and there was a small step, and they weren't able to get in on their motorized scooter. I went and met with the owners of the pharmacy, and they very quickly wanted to and embraced how they could improve their service and allow those people to be able to enter their premises. I shared with them about StopGap, which I had learned through this whole process. Very quickly, within a couple of weeks, they had one of those ramps created and made, and now it's there. That addressed the people who had the concern. It's much better, obviously, for the business owner, and again just allows everybody to have that same access that you and I enjoy today.

I think that was a good news story, and for part of that, I give credit back to Jonathan and Dylan, because they brought that whole idea to my attention. It's a really quick, easy and cost-effective fix for people, particularly in a lot of our small, older towns where a lot of things were built without the need to meet today's accessibility challenges.

Paul Rosen, the Paralympian: I had the pleasure to meet him through this. He's just an inspiring individual. I've said in this House many, many times over the years that my greatest hero is Terry Fox, and to see what he did with a supposed disability—I would suggest to you an ability that many of us could honour by saying that we want to be like him and show that it's about spirit and attitude and being welcoming and engaging, and ensuring that people, regardless of their ability, can be valuable, valuable members of our society. Paul, certainly, is one of those people. He came out and spoke that day and shared all of the things that he has accomplished in life, despite some physical ability challenges. I have to tell you that people like him are going out across the community, speaking all over about their challenges, but more so about the opportunities. I think that's a wonderful thing.

The difference between the old and new symbols, again, is in how the person in the wheelchair is depicted. The new dynamic sign puts emphasis on a person in motion, leaning forward and moving ahead with spinning wheels.

Last spring, I joined scores of supporters at Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital here in Toronto where I helped repaint parking spaces with the new dynamic symbol of access. There was lots of energy there that day. There were a lot of people who were quite keen to get in and wanted to be part of that painting. Many people with some ability challenges were right in the middle of it, painting their hearts out. It was wonderful to see.

In May, I tabled this motion in the House, and I reached out to local councils in my riding to seek their support on

adopting the same across Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound communities. I certainly encourage every municipality, village, town and city across our great province, our country—in fact, I think the world should embrace this, because once you get that movement going it will just take off on its own.

I believe this re-imaged symbol reflects the dynamic role that people with disabilities can and, in fact, do play in modern society and will open up the way for better engagement and inclusion in everyday life.

I want to acknowledge, just before, because I'm going to forget if I don't do this—I always call her Monique Smith, but it's Monique Taylor—the member from Hamilton Mountain. Again, here in the Legislature we have a small committee, and we encouraged the precinct here to adopt this symbol as well and to show by leadership that we are actually doing what we stand in this House and want to do. So I want to acknowledge Monique and her abilities. I know she was quite keen to do it, if I wasn't going to reintroduce this, so I want to pay acknowledgement to her and show that we actually can work together when we put our minds together in this place.

The new sign is already adopted by a number of cities across Ontario—Toronto, Hamilton, Mississauga, Sarnia, Uxbridge, Stratford—with several more in the process. Many have already adopted the dynamic symbol in places that are not mentioned in the Highway Traffic Act and Building Code: accessible parking spot pavements, bathroom signs etc. Likewise, many jurisdictions, cities and communities, like Nanaimo, BC; Phoenix, Arizona; New York; and Connecticut have all done the same.

In addition, 70-plus disability organizations and communities have formally adopted and endorsed the symbol. I'll name just a few of them: Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital; Ontario Association of Children's Rehabilitation Services; March of Dimes; Special Olympics Canada; Easter Seals Canada; provincial youth advocate Irwin Elman; MS Society of Canada; Muscular Dystrophy Canada; MADD, Mothers Against Drunk Driving; StopGap Foundation; AccessNow; Accessible Media Inc.; the United Church of Canada and many, many more. Also, Impark parking has committed to use the dynamic symbol in accessible parking spots in the lots they manage across Canada. That encompasses thousands and thousands of spots. Again, I think once people start to see that wide scale, whether it's in a community, a province or a country, everyone else is going to start to jump on it. One of the biggest things from introducing this is to actually raise awareness and promote the ability to do that. The dynamic symbol has been painted at Tim Hortons Field with the Hamilton Tiger-Cats. I'm sure Mr. Miller from Hamilton will be one of the endorsers in that community, certainly.

This supports our path to the implementation of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, the AODA, by 2025. The change itself is a catalyst for conversation and education on the importance of access and inclusion, and I ask all members to support it. This is

something that I believe is good for everyone. It is something that everybody in this House, everybody at home watching and everyone out there can respond to and show their support for.

I want to acknowledge all of the people with those ability challenges who persevere every day and show us, through their courage and dedication, that life can be different, can be positive, and there can be wonderful outcomes. Most importantly, I want to show support for those people who choose not to let an ability challenge limit them and who I believe are dynamic, determined and valuable contributors to our communities, to our province, to our country and to our society.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Joel Harden: It's a pleasure to rise in this House today for the first time in my new role as the critic for accessibility and people with disabilities. Like many of my colleagues who have been assigned their roles, I have spent a great amount of time trying to learn from advocates and from activists—it's not a dirty word for me—within those communities.

It's funny. One of those people I spoke to, David Lepofsky, reminded me that the next time I take the bus or the subway in the city of Toronto and I hear the announcer announcing the stops, it's because David and a number of people from within his range of communities had to wage a lawsuit in order to get that done, first the subway and then the bus. He reminded me in this long conversation—almost a 40-minute job interview, Speaker; I can tell you it was tough, and I was learning and soaking in a lot—that we can't put people who are differently abled than us into the position of being the private accessibility police for the province. That's not right. Our job as legislators in this space, as my friend from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound has said quite articulately and quite well, is to lead, to make sure that we provide opportunities for everybody to exercise their opportunities in this province. Where we have situations where people who have different abilities than me are left behind and are not able to contribute, we leave our entire society behind.

One of the things I wanted to do in the short amount of time I have—and I want to share my time with my friend from Hamilton Mountain and my other friend from Beaches–East York—is to talk a little bit about the people I've already met in my capacity of doing work. We're going to be voting in favour of this private member's bill because we agree with the intent, but I also want to make sure—because there is something that troubles me personally about this bill, and my friends will speak to other aspects of it.

I'm troubled at the notion—we're in 2018, Speaker. The AODA announces that by 2025, we want Ontario to be fully accessible. A big part of this private member's bill, as I understand it—and my friend can correct me if I'm wrong—is that its inherent value is that it is cost-neutral. Well, if we want a fully accessible Ontario by 2025, we can't operate with that mindset. We need massive public investments to make sure that buildings

that are being built right now are accessible. There are too many buildings being built right now that are not accessible.

We need to think about where we're going to raise the money to make Ontario accessible. It's not a cost-neutral exercise. As long as we approach the issue of making Ontario more accessible with a frugal mindset, we will not get to where we need to be by 2025. Those aren't my words; these are the words said by David Lepofsky and others—others like Blaine Cameron, who is the chair, back home in Ottawa Centre, of Ottawa ACORN, which is an organization that fights for low-income people in the city of Ottawa. I can always remember the times when I've gone canvassing with Blaine. Do you know why? Because they were in apartment buildings, always in apartment buildings, because Blaine lives in a wheelchair. Despite the fact that Blaine has so much to contribute, he was always hamstrung in our campaign—call centre work and canvassing in apartment buildings.

And not all apartment buildings; so many apartment buildings in Ottawa Centre are inaccessible. There's a big step right in front of the door in a building that ought to be accessible. We have too many statutes in this province that allow property owners to get around the responsibility to make their buildings accessible.

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Where are we going to raise the money to make sure that Blaine and David and people like Sally Thomas—that's who I also want to talk about. That name may ring a bell for some of us in this chamber. Sally Thomas holds the Paralympic weightlifting record in her weight class. I am proud to call Sally Thomas a friend. If you visit me in my office, I'll show you a piece of art that she drew. It has, in bold letters, "Nope" emblazoned on a bright green and orange background. When she was selling this art to me, she said, "This captures what I've experienced in my life: that I have had to scream at the top of my lungs, 'Nope.'" This is somebody who represented our country in Athens during that Olympics in 2004. But ever since coming home and trying to contribute to the community, Sally has been in a position where she has lived on the Ontario Disability Support Program, where there have been people who work for our government monitoring the level of her bank account to make sure she's not making too much money. When her art sales go really well, she has a penalty on her income. That's how we treat people who are otherwise-abled than us in the province of Ontario right now.

My point is, if we have to make sure Ontario is fully accessible by 2025, which, I understand from my friend's intent in this private member's bill—if I'm right, it's set in the spirit of that. We need to find the money to make sure Blaine and Sally and David and all people in Ontario have the means to ensure they can live full, contributory lives and we benefit from their skills and we don't penalize them.

One way in which I will encourage our province, our government to find that money: Call up your friends at Revenue Canada, call up the people working for the

Minister of Finance in Ontario and talk about people who, because they have access to a lovely accountant and a lovely lawyer, pay a different level of tax or shelter tax in our province. Some \$298 billion—my friends in the Conservative Party often talk about Ontario's debt, the largest subnational debt in the world. That amount of money we lose every year because of tax evasion by very wealthy people is feeding into our problem. So I'm looking to you for leadership because people with disabilities, people otherwise-abled, need massive reinvestments in our public spaces. We have to find the money. I don't care if you're powerful; you shouldn't be able to get out of paying taxes like everybody else does. That's where we're going to find the money to make sure people live full and equal lives.

With that, I'd like to pass the mike to my friend from Hamilton Mountain.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? I recognize the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: It doesn't quite work that way.

I'm pleased to speak in support of my colleague and friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. Mr. Walker has been raising this issue for many, many years and months. I remember seeing a tweet where he was part of the painting of the forward motion and what I think is a very positive symbol to remind people that when we are differently abled that does not mean that we are disabled. The fact that we can send that message with this very small change, frankly, means a lot to individuals.

We all have our personal experience with friends or family members who may be in a wheelchair, who may have other disabilities, and I think what this forward motion does more than anything else is acknowledge the fact that you are still an active and engaged member of our society and we need and want you to participate. It's very, very simple.

I was actually hoping that my colleague would ask for forgiveness and show the symbol because I think it speaks to what a small change can mean and the message that it can transform.

I'm pleased that in his first opportunity to debate a private member's motion he has brought forward something that he has worked long and hard on. I hope in my role as Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, particularly on the sport side, learning and dealing with the para-sport athletes, in particular—seeing what kind of passion they bring to their new sports activities really engages and motivates me to want to encourage and support my colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I'm happy to participate. As he has already mentioned, former Lieutenant Governor David Onley has been part of this movement and actively involved in it, as has para-athlete Paul Rosen.

Anything that we can do proactively to encourage businesses, to encourage governments, to encourage municipalities to change their symbol as it needs to be updated, I think, is a positive step. I'm happy to support it today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm really honoured and pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this today and to congratulate the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for once again bringing this forward.

Yes, we did have a conversation about where this bill would be now that he's in a different role. He assured me that this was a priority for him and something that he felt he was going to bring forward again. I'm really pleased to have the opportunity to be able to share in this experience.

From the first day that this came to the Legislature, it was exciting for me. I had the opportunity to meet with Dylan and Jonathan, who are our representatives in Ontario of bringing this forward. It gave me hope for something; it gives us something to point at, something to give us reason to talk about.

I know the member didn't do it, and I know it's probably a prop, but I put this sticker on my phone, which is the dynamic symbol. I put this sticker on my phone that same day. When I did that, people, including the mayor of my own city, started to question, "What's the symbol? What is that sticker? What does that mean?" It sparked a conversation. It allowed for people to freely speak about a community that we all look to embrace, that we all look for in our future, because we know that we don't live in a completely inclusive community. This gives me the opportunity to push that forward.

I also have attended many paintings in my city. We've posted stickers on different parking signs and really just used this symbol to educate. We know that if we don't freely have these conversations, if we don't fully embrace people's abilities, then we won't get to that space of inclusion.

Although it is nothing more than a simple symbol to some, it is a lifeline to others. It's about the education. It's about the conversation. It's about what our communities are going to look like in the future. It's about people who have many abilities and possibly don't have the ability to walk themselves into the room.

So how do we make space? How do we make sure that employers are looking at people's abilities instead of their disabilities? This symbol, for me, is that access to have that conversation.

It's an honour for me to be a part of it. I've spoken to many folks across this province who are also excited about the change, about how we can move forward in our communities, about how we can ensure that everyone is included and that people are seen for their ability instead of their disability. I'm thrilled about that.

My friend the member from Ottawa Centre talked about the fact that the AODA is coming upon us quickly. We know that many of our communities are not ready. We know that the previous government pretty much dropped the ball on making sure that we are prepared on time for this. But my community has put forward a motion stating that we are short \$157 million to ensure that our over 500 facilities, sidewalks and super mailboxes are accessible. I wanted to make sure that I brought that up today because

it is important and it's not just my community that's talking about it; it's communities across the province that are talking about it and how we're going to be ready and the cost that is associated with that. I wanted to have that opportunity.

1400

I also want to thank some folks who have worked really hard in my city on pushing this symbol forward. Anthony Frisina: He is the co-host of Above and Beyond which is featured on a local station, Cable 14, in Hamilton. He has really picked up the ball on this in Hamilton to organize paintings, to get more people involved in the parking spots and about the change in the symbol. I wanted to mention him.

I also want to mention Sarah Jama, who is another great advocate in Hamilton. We're just filled with wonderful advocates who are doing great work in the city of Hamilton. She's the co-founder of the Disability Justice Network of Ontario, which is just Hamilton-based at this point but the plan is to go across the province.

The point of all of this, Speaker, is that we are moving forward, we are having conversations and we are having people think out of the box in how we can make sure that our communities are inclusive. That is the biggest benefit of the change of this symbol for me, because the most important part is that we truly see people's ability instead of their disability.

Thank you for allowing me some time. Congratulations to the member. I really look forward to this coming to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? I recognize the member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Speaker. I think it's the first time I've seen you in the chair. It's very good to see you there. I want to thank the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for putting this forward. I know it's something that's very close to his heart. I believe that it's very important.

It is about a symbol, and symbols are important for two reasons. They recognize and acknowledge those individuals—this symbol in particular—who have an exceptionality or disability, whatever you would like to call it; I prefer "exceptionality." It recognizes them, and they see themselves as able people.

The second thing is it hopes, as the member from Hamilton Mountain was saying, to change behaviour, to change our viewpoint, to make us aware. It is really quite incredible when you go around a community. My father-in-law is 96. He's in a chair. We take him out all the time. The difficulty that we have getting around sometimes is really quite surprising, especially when it comes to restrooms. It's really quite incredible—curb cuts at a hospital.

It's one of those things that we have to be more attuned to because they create barriers for people. That's the thing that we want to remove. We want to make sure not just that we are inclusive and make sure that people feel included and recognized and acknowledged, but also that they have freedom of mobility. That's really critical. That's a really essential part of freedom: the ability to be mobile.

Again, I want to thank the member very much for bringing this forward. I'm sure that the motion will pass and I hope that the initiative will move forward.

I do want to say a couple of things as they relate to disabilities because I think they're important to say. I do want to say a few things about people with disabilities or exceptionalities who are on ODSP and the basic income. I'm very disappointed that the Basic Income Pilot was ended. That is the government's prerogative, but I think it was an opportunity to take a look at how we can better serve those people who are caught. I want to acknowledge that the government did extend it until March 31. I think that was the right thing to do. I think it was the wrong thing to end the pilot because I think there are opportunities there for us to do something differently. We've been doing the same thing for decades, asking the same questions, taking the same measures. I know. I've been there. We've all been there. We've all been there in government and out of government. We need to look at things in a different way, and that's why that project was important.

The second thing is, as the member from Ottawa Centre highlighted, the allowed income when you're on disability. Now, the previous government changed the regulation to double that amount from \$200 to \$400. That regulation was then withdrawn by the current government.

Your stated purpose in looking at income assistance is to make sure that people get to work, get a job. The increase in that income allowance was an incentive for people to get jobs. When you remove it, you're creating a disincentive.

I know it's the government's prerogative to change things. You were elected; you're the government. But if your stated purpose is to get people off assistance and into jobs, rolling back the amount of income that they earn is counterintuitive.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: It makes no sense.

Mr. John Fraser: It doesn't make any sense. You could look at the amounts for how much people can have in assets. I can see you withdrawing that. I can see that; I don't agree with it. But I think that of all the things that you pulled back, that was the one thing that made no sense to me at all, because (1) it was the right thing to do, and (2) it achieves what your stated purpose is.

I hope that the government will reconsider the change in that regulation and make it an allowance, so that people who are on Ontario disability supports can earn a modest income. We're talking about going from \$200 to \$400. Think about what \$400 means to you. Think about what it buys you. It seems to be a little parsimonious to be pulling that back that way.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm so pleased to rise today and support this motion from my colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. He's our chief government whip. We're really getting used to all of our new roles for ourselves, and all of our new roles for our colleagues as well.

I got a letter from a constituent named Dylan Itzikowitz on February 14, 2017, and I'm just going to read part of it.

He emailed me on behalf of the Forward Movement, "a not-for-profit awareness campaign to lobby the Ontario government to amend legislation allowing for, or mandating the use of, the newly designed dynamic symbol of access." He gave me a bit of information about himself: He was a pedestrian victim of a drunk-driving accident, and it temporarily restricted him to a wheelchair.

During his recovery, he came across the Accessible Icon Project, a movement in the United States that redesigned the old International Symbol of Access, creating the new dynamic symbol of access. For a lot of people at home, they're still used to saying the "handicap symbol." The whole point is that nobody's handicapped. People have different abilities, and this is sort of the next step on that. This is to show a symbol where it looks like somebody is in motion in a wheelchair, as opposed to just sitting still in a wheelchair.

Wheelchairs are able to move, and we all know now. We see them on our streets, on our sidewalks and in our stores. People have motorized scooters. When I designed my optometry clinic in Markham, we had the Participation House on the grounds of the Markham Stouffville Hospital and we made our corridors extra wide in the office. It took a lot of extra space, actually, to do. We made the corners not sharp corners; they were gradual, because we knew how many patients come in in different types of wheelchairs and motorized scooters. And we actually chose a floor that made it easier for them as well.

In order to contribute to Ontario's commitment to becoming barrier-free by 2025—we've heard some talk about that; the previous government promised, and we're nowhere near on track to do that, to make our province more accessible—Jonathan Silver, a friend of Dylan's, with support from the founders of the Accessible Icon Project and the Centre for Social Innovation, launched the Forward Movement. They have a website, theforwardmovement.ca, so people at home can look that up. They've been campaigning, and they've been getting a lot of businesses to support it, as well as non-profits, as well as different municipalities.

Nobody is suggesting that we go out and have to paint over and put stickers on the old symbols of accessibility, but going forward, any new symbols should be the new symbol. We know that it's not a perfect symbol and we heard that here today. We'd like it to incorporate all ability challenges. I know it was mentioned that David Onley, the previous Lieutenant Governor, strived to do that.

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I spoke to David Lepofsky, who was also mentioned, who is visually impaired and is a professor at York University, and maybe some other universities. He would like the symbol to incorporate those with visual impairment. I've spoken to Peter Athanasopoulos from Spinal Cord Injury and participated—they do a barbeque every summer. I want to invite new members here to participate, to do wheelchair games and to have a little bit more of an understanding of the challenges. Louise Russo is very well known; she was the victim of a shooting and is in a wheelchair. And Wendy Murphy, as well, who is a former journalist, was in a car accident and is in a wheelchair.

These are all very dynamic people. As soon as you meet them, you understand the need for a new symbol and new terminology. It's always hard to have change. We all resist change, and we all fail to sometimes understand why we need change, but we do need change.

I got to meet all of these individuals because I worked on a private member's bill, the Transportation Systems Improvement Advisory Committee Act, and part of that was to deal with accessible parking. We all know that accessible parking needs to be accessible and that there are too many counterfeit permits out there, too many problems. There is so much great new technology that we could be using, not just new symbols, but new technology as well.

I look forward to seeing all of us using the new symbol in our ridings and encouraging all of the businesses and the non-profits in our ridings to use the new symbol as well.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm happy to support this motion that my colleague has put forward. I think it's a fabulous representation. A pictogram is something that is actually a very powerful symbol. We have a number of powerful symbols right here. The mace, for example, represents the power that's given to the government to govern. Having a pictogram, something that shows activity, something that shows ability, is a very strong symbol. The previous symbol showed somebody who was very stationary, who needed help, who required someone to push them around. The new symbol is completely different.

One of the things that I've learned over the last little while—I've been involved with Challenger Baseball, with the Kawartha Komets special-needs hockey team, with the Electric City Maroon and White special hockey team and with Special Hockey International. If anyone has the opportunity to spend any time with any of those special-needs teams to see what it really means to truly do something because you love it, it's an opportunity that I would strongly suggest everyone take. They have taught me so much. They have shown me that it doesn't matter what their abilities are, they have exceptional abilities.

I was the lead developer for Ontario's most-used IEP software in this province and I spent a great deal of time looking at what those exceptionalities would be and how we would make modifications and accommodations for various people throughout education. One of the things I learned was that almost 20% of the population in Ontario right now has either a visible or an invisible disability.

I recognize that the new symbol doesn't encompass all of the different disabilities or abilities that there may be but it does represent, more than anything else, the fact that they are in motion, that they have that ability. It is an action symbol. Symbols are very, very powerful. We can change a lot of the language, we can change a lot of the thinking on what it means to be someone who is in one of those positions. We can change the thinking of the 80% of the population who don't have to struggle on a day-to-day basis just to prove that they are equal to all of us. It's

something that we're doing, in my opinion, in a very responsible, very respectful way. We're grandfathering out the old symbol and we're replacing it with the new one whenever someone needs to make one of those changes. It's an intelligent approach. It's an approach that is not going to be expensive for any individual. It's not going to create an additional burden on anyone.

As we celebrate this moving forward, I think it's a fabulous, fabulous pictogram. I appreciate that the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound has reintroduced this, because I think it's really important that we as the government take that lead on it and show all of the people in Ontario that we recognize there is a large number of abilities, and that no one should be put in a position where they feel that they are less than anyone else. This symbol does that. It shows that anyone who has any kind of an exceptionality is truly an action person, is someone who is moving forward, who does contribute a great deal to our communities. I'm very happy to support this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Bill Walker: I want to thank all of the people who have spoken to this, and I'll address a couple of things.

The member from Ottawa Centre: It's certainly very appropriate to acknowledge David Lepofsky. When I was the critic, David was a very, very strong champion. I have great admiration for his dedication and commitment for championing those people with abilities and challenges.

You mentioned the AODA. That's something that, sadly, was not really addressed a whole lot by the last government, and that's a concern that I have. But I do want to challenge—the whole reason that I did this with the cost-neutral is that I also have respect for those not-for-profit agencies and those small businesses who don't have the ability to just jump forward because they've taken so long. I wanted it to not get caught up in that. I wanted to ensure that this is something you can do without a whole lot of money. Absolutely, there should be money for lots of different things. This is one that you can do without putting an extra burden on people who want to do it voluntarily, so I wanted to do that.

You talked about taxes and philanthropic generosity. I was in the world of fundraising, and those people who had that ability—because a tax typically goes back into health care and these types of projects, which is absolutely significant. That's money that is spent by people with that generous spirit to give back to their communities in very significant ways.

The member from Hamilton Mountain: Of course, I want to thank you and acknowledge you. The intent, originally, if I had had a much later date, would have been to co-author this with you, but because of coming back early and being able to move very quickly to get this on to the table, I had to go forward. But I do want to acknowledge your efforts and your abilities.

The member from Ottawa South brought in some stuff with regard to the programs and the challenges for us. What I want to challenge him on, as the new interim

leader, is that his government spent \$25 billion on a two-year hydro rebate without fixing hydro. That \$25 billion could have gone into something like the accessibility program that they committed to, and it did not.

I want to acknowledge the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport, a champion for everyone and very capable. It's appropriate that she is the minister. She will certainly be a person encouraging active engagement by all, and is going to be a wonderful advocate.

The member from Thornhill, a very compassionate advocate for the people and certainly someone who is endorsing the Forward Movement, brought up a good point about how design is critical. We can do a lot of things, again, with the building code and design to ensure, going forward, that we have the ability to do that.

My colleague and friend from Peterborough—Kawartha: an exceptional abilities champion. I think what he was really saying there—we do need the Forward Movement. We can't leave anyone behind. By supporting my bill today, we are going to ensure that the Forward Movement will help with accessibility.

FAIRNESS IN PETROLEUM PRODUCTS
PRICING ACT, 2018
LOI DE 2018 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ
EN MATIÈRE D'ÉTABLISSEMENT DU PRIX
DES PRODUITS PÉTROLIERS

Mr. Bisson moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 7, An Act to regulate the price of petroleum products / Projet de loi 7, Loi réglementant le prix des produits pétroliers.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):
Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I bring this bill back—there are a number of times I've tried to bring this bill forward. The last time I did so, the then-Liberal government voted against the bill. Surprisingly, the Conservatives supported us on this bill the last time. That gives me hope that, possibly, we might get support this time again.

Let me make very quickly my arguments as to why we need to do this. I think the Conservative members may very well agree with me on this one.

First of all, I'll tell you the story of driving down from Timmins to here on Tuesday. I drove down here early Tuesday morning. The price of gas on Highway 11—no, I did the Highway 69 side. Between Highway 144 through Highway 69 and then Highway 400, the difference in price of gas was \$1.44 at Pointe au Baril, which is pretty close to Parry Sound, to a high of \$1.40 in Timmins, to a low of about \$1.27 as we got closer to Toronto. Tell me how it is that it makes any sense that on that stretch of highway, where that fuel truck is delivering gas to every one of those gas stations along that route—it's the same type of fuel truck. They drive the same highway.

1420

Mr. John Vanthof: It's the same truck.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's the same truck. They drop the gas at one gas station, and then a little bit further the price of gas is 10 cents a litre more.

My good friend who lives in Kapuskasing, the member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay—I go to Kapuskasing to buy gas. Normally it's 10 cents a litre cheaper than buying gas in Timmins. Why? Because we're off the Trans-Canada Highway, and gas companies take advantage of citizens and gouge the price depending on where you live. If you happen to live in an urban area where there's lots of competition, you tend to get a lower price of gas. But if you live in a lot of places in Ontario—rural and northern Ontario—you find yourself in a position of having to pay a lot more for gas than you would in a place like Toronto.

The difference for us is, we've got no choice. There's no train, there's no subway, there's no public transit. Except for places like North Bay, Sudbury, Timmins, Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay, there are hardly any communities in northern Ontario that have transit. You've got to take your car, or you've got to take your truck—and most of us drive trucks, because we've got to haul firewood to heat our homes so we don't have to pay the high hydro prices. It costs a lot of money.

I think on the very basis of just the gas price differential that we see from one end of the highway to the other, it doesn't make any sense. My Lord, we can sell a case of beer in Cornwall for the same price that we can sell it for in Fort Frances, but we can't sell a litre of gas at the same price on one stretch of highway? It makes no sense.

I think it's a question of fairness and it's a question of protecting the public and the consumer when it comes to being gouged at the pump. Now here's the "gouged" part that I think the Conservatives should pay attention to: In the last election, Mr. Ford promised that he was going to lower the price of gas by lowering the gas tax, and that's an option that he has. Ring-a-ding-a-ding the bell already. The first thing that the gas companies did on this government being elected—they've jacked the price of gas in most places up by 10 cents a litre since you've been elected. The gas companies haven't even waited for the 10 cents to be reduced in order to take back the room so they can put more money in their pockets. They've already jacked the price up 10 to 12 cents a litre since you've come to power. For example, on election night—and I took a picture of the pump—in Timmins I was paying 11 cents less than I'm paying now. The price of gas in Timmins today is about \$1.39 or \$1.40. It was \$1.27 on election night.

Clearly the gas companies understand what's going on. They listened to the last election, and they said, "Whoa, look at this, guys, my good gas company friends." They wring their hands, they look at each other across the boardroom table, and they say, "Hey, he's going to take six, seven, eight, 10 cents off the litre. Boy, there are profits that we can make. We can move in and take out the differential, offset the reduction in taxes and just take that money ourselves."

Essentially, what you guys are now going to do if you don't have a mechanism of regulation is you're going to

be putting taxpayer dollars into the pockets of very wealthy oil companies, who, quite frankly, make enough money as it is. Should the oil retailers, should the gas distributors, should the oil sector make money? Absolutely. They've got to get a return on investment. Everybody understands basic economics. You can't extract oil and deliver, distribute and sell at a loss. You've got to be able to make a profit, and we're fine with that.

What we look at in this particular bill is a gas regulation system that is fair. It's based on a study of all of the gas regulatory systems that are in North America—because let's recognize the truth: There are gas regulations in the United States as there are in Canada in some jurisdictions. Some of those models are good; some are less good. Some of them have tended to bring the price of gas higher as a medium in order to get it lower in the outlying regions, and that's a problem. If I were living in the city of Toronto and I saw my gas prices go up because of gas price regulation, I don't think I'd be very happy. That's not what this bill calls for.

What this bill calls for is to, first of all, take out those spikes that we see on the weekends, where the gas companies gouge us by jacking up the price only because they know we're all going to be taking to the highway to get to the cottage or go visit our friends and relatives—get rid of those spikes at the very least, right? So that doesn't affect the medium price of gas for anybody; that just makes sure that gas companies don't take advantage of us on those particular long weekends—and also to deal with the differential price across the province.

I can buy a case of 24 in Kenora, I can buy it in Thunder Bay, I can buy it in Cornwall for the same price. If the beer companies, which are private, they're not government—the Brewers Retail, people think it's a government agency; it's a monopoly owned by the beer companies that distribute the beer. So if the private sector agrees to be regulated so that the price of beer can be the same price in one town as it is in another, the same as a bottle of wine at your LCBO is the same price for a certain brand in Cornwall as it is, let's say, in Fort Frances, why wouldn't we have a similar system for the price of gas in Ontario?

Now, the government's going to say, "Oh, regulating energy is terrible." We regulate energy as it is. When it comes to natural gas, the price of natural gas is regulated. Nobody is crying unfair about regulating the price of natural gas—and a good thing that is because the energy board looks at all applications that come before it and they say, "How much does it cost to get it out of the ground? How much does it cost to transport it? What does it cost to distribute it? What is a fair return on investment?" and they set the price accordingly. If we didn't have regulation of the gas industry, heating our homes would be a lot more expensive today than what it is. That regulation system works.

We also regulate the price of electricity. Now, electricity has gone up in price, and I'm the first to admit that, but it's not because of regulation; it's because, quite frankly, the previous Conservative government deregulated the electrical system and then the Liberals privatized

it. So we're now buying electricity through the private sector on contracts that we must buy the energy—even if we don't want it—for prices that are higher than we can produce it ourselves through our public utilities.

So I don't want to hear an argument, "Oh, yeah, but regulation doesn't work in the case of electricity." The problem with electricity has been the privatization of the system. Over half of the system is now privatized and that's why the price has gone up.

My argument, simply put, is this: We should allow this bill to pass at second reading. We should allow this bill to go into committee. We should have industry experts come before us, because you can learn a lot of things when you have a bill in committee and you give it some time so the consumer advocates out there—the CAA, the gas industry and others—can come before our committee and say "Here's what's good and here's what's bad with this bill."

I won't be hurt if there are amendments to the bill that strengthen parts that we may not have gotten right, because drafting legislation is like that. But I think it should at least get to committee so that we're able to then really get at putting in place a system that doesn't jack up the price of energy on a medium system, where everybody's price goes up so somebody at the top can go down, but that we deal with weekend price fixing, that we deal with what happens when it comes to the different prices of gas that we have as differentials across the province, and that we deal with making sure that industry is fairly compensated for their efforts in the work that they do in bringing gas to the gas pump but that the consumer isn't gouged.

Last but not least, if this government is going to move forward—and I have to believe you are because you have the cap-and-trade bill in the House now—and at one point move on reducing the price of gas by eliminating some gas taxes, we need to protect ourselves from the gas companies because, my friends, here's what they're going to do—they've already started it: they jacked up the price as soon as you guys got elected by about 11 or 12 cents in anticipation that there was going to be a tax break on gas where people are going to say, "Oh, well, it's only \$1.40. We got a reduction." Well, it used to be \$1.29 or \$1.28 prior to the last election.

Mark my words: The price of gas—I heard the Premier today talk about members of our caucus who want a high price of gas. Nothing could be further from the truth. We have a member who wrote a thesis on it, I think it was. That was just something that he did in university. Nobody in this caucus believes that there should be a high price of gas. What we think is there should be a price of gas that makes sense to the consumer and also makes sense when it comes to making sure those industries can get a fair return on their investment. That is the only fair thing to do.

The last time, the Conservatives of the day in opposition voted with me and with New Democrats in order to support our initiative. Unfortunately, the House rose and we never got to committee. That's unfortunate, but we have a chance to do this right. If we're going to protect consumers when it comes to those vagaries of the price, when it comes to price differential, when it comes to being

jacked up on the weekends, when it comes to gas companies pocketing whatever reduction in taxes you're going to give on the gas tax we need to have a form of regulation.

1430

If you don't think that the gas companies—you're paying about \$1.40 for gas right now where I live, roughly; about \$1.39 or \$1.40. Mark my words: You're going to reduce the gas price by five or six cents, or whatever it is. The price of gas is just going to go back up again, and the companies are going to take up the difference. All you will have done is to take taxpayers' dollars that could have gone to health care, that could have gone to social housing, that could have gone to building our roads, that could go to municipalities to help them maintain transit and other things, and give the money to already rich corporations who are making enough money when it comes to the price of gas.

I want to say as a New Democrat that I have no problem with gas companies making money. I think they need to make a profit, because without profit they can't operate, but I also think that at times consumers have to be protected; and the mark of a good government is one who knows when and when not to regulate, and to do it in a way that makes some sense, so that at the end, what's at the centre of our decision is the public and making sure that the public right is maintained and that the public is protected from gas companies who continually—continually—try to gouge us at the pumps.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Calandra: Thank you to the member opposite for his obvious passion on this bill. I understand that he has brought it forward a number of times. It is a bill that we've seen in my time in office in Ottawa. It is something that has been talked about on a number of occasions. The price of gas is something that the Competition Bureau has investigated. I'm sure a lot of members of this House feel the exact same frustrations that the member opposite talks about and are trying to understand how it is that gas prices can differ so widely. I can assure the member that it's not just along the route that he takes into work or to this Legislature; it can differ across the GTA.

There are a lot of different things that go into the price of gas, not least of which, of course, obviously—I'm sure the member knows—is the price of crude oil: where we're getting the crude from, whether it's from Canadian sources or international sources, how that crude is getting to refineries, how the crude is then turned into fuel for consumers. There are a lot of different things that go into deciding what the price of gas is.

All of that does not take away from the fact that Ontario consumers, on a daily basis, face a lot of different emotions when it comes to filling up their gas tank. We all know full well, of course, that with a massive hurricane potentially hitting the US coast, there is potential for some gas price spikes over the next little while because of the potential for refinery damage and other issues.

But, Madam Speaker, there are a number of parts of the bill, and I think it's important to talk about some of the

different parts of the bill. The member, in his remarks, talked about not wanting to make the comparison between fixing gas prices and the price of electricity, but I think it is actually a very important comparison in the context of the bill and in the context of how the member put his bill forward. In the context of how it is written in this bill, it really does follow the same difficult circumstances that the previous Liberal government put the people of Ontario in with respect to hydro prices. I think the member was very correct on this: When the government puts in place an incorrect pricing model, the result is that Ontario taxpayers will foot the bill for that incorrect pricing model.

I'm not sure that the model that the member has suggested here is the correct model, that it will have the benefits that the member is suggesting that it will have, but I am certainly open to hearing and debating what mechanism might have the results that the member talks about. But I do have to stress that I am very, very concerned by how it is worded in the proposed bill, because I do worry that we would see the exact same impact that we had under the hydro scheme of the previous Liberal government. We are paying for that, and we will continue to pay for that for many, many decades; and I don't think that either this side of the House or the opposition envies the prospect of their kids, their grandkids and their great-grandkids paying for bad policies that have brought, really, economic hardship on Ontario taxpayers. That's one of the concerns that I have with the bill as it is written.

I also note that, as part of the bill—and again, this is something that we'll have to discuss. Let me just assure the member that I think it is important that the bill does go to committee. I hope that the members on this side of the House will agree with me and vote in favour of the bill, so that it can get to committee, so that we can study these things. Let me just say that to help explain why I want to talk a bit further about some of the issues.

In part of the bill, it's obvious that records would have to be kept. There would have to be inspectors hired. The problem I see with this—and again, we'll have to get experts in and industry representatives in—is adding an additional level of red tape to the retailers. It's red tape that they'll have to cover, which will then cost more. This is at a time when we are trying to reduce red tape. We're trying to reduce the costs to our small, medium and large job creators. I worry about that. I note that the bill would call for the hiring of a number of inspectors to undertake what I suggest would be a large red-tape issue for our small, medium and large job creators. I wonder if inspectors who are looking at paper wouldn't be better utilized in different areas of the economy: environmental regulation, for instance, or labour inspectors, WSIB and so on and so forth. But again, that's something we can talk about. We can debate and we can hear it at committee. We can hear from all sectors, both pro and con.

I am somewhat surprised, and I only say this because the member was so passionate about this: As you know, Madam Speaker, one of the first bills we brought in was the cancellation of the White Pines wind farm. Part of that, obviously not to rehash that, is it was a very unpopular

local energy project which would have cost Ontario taxpayers over the long term. But one of the things that the member opposite was so vociferous about and so passionate about, exposing his conservative roots, was what he said was “breaking contracts.” Part of his bill calls for the breaking of a contract. I’ll read it; it’s under “Contractual term of no effect”: “Any term in a contract that permits a wholesaler or retailer to sell a petroleum product at a price in contravention of this act is of no force and effect.”

When it came to White Pines, the honourable member was suggesting that this would be a bad signal. It would be a bad signal and could impact our ability to bring business to the province of Ontario. We were suggesting just the opposite. But I was very surprised that the member, given his passion on that in the White Pines debate, would have put this into that bill. But again, I think we have an opportunity at committee where we can best discuss this a little bit further. I certainly look forward to it.

The member also referenced other jurisdictions in Canada. There are different jurisdictions. In Quebec, I think they have a price floor. Nova Scotia has a ceiling and a floor, so there are different models by which other provinces are regulating gas pricing across Canada. It has not proven to be as successful as the architects of the regulation had hoped it to be. That doesn’t necessarily mean that we don’t have an opportunity to do something better, but I don’t think it should be our number one goal to match what other jurisdictions have done and have failed so miserably. It has been shown that by removing competition, in some instances the taxpayer ends up paying \$300 to \$400 to \$500 more for the price of fuel because they don’t have the ability to take advantage of price swings.

We do have the benefit of these other jurisdictions. I suggest that when we’re at committee we’ll have the ability to call them in, see what was good about their systems and what was bad about them, and see if we can improve them, but at the same time there should be absolutely no willingness on any of us in this Legislature to go re-create something that has not been successful in other jurisdictions. But, by getting it to committee, we can make sure that that doesn’t happen.

1440

We also, I think, have a responsibility. The member referenced some of the variations in pricing on his trip. It’s really part of what we have as a problem in this country. We have the Thunder Bay terminal. As the member will know, the petroleum terminal in Thunder Bay is predominantly supplied by western Canada crude, which comes in through trains. Obviously, we don’t have the pipeline capacity, so it comes in through trains. The price would be very difficult, I would suggest, to affix when other commodities that are going by train—wheat, for instance, which we’ve had a very difficult time getting to market across this country. That would cause a great fluctuation.

The member would probably agree, I hope and suggest, that we would have to have different pricing zones across

the province, given the population disparity, given how we get oil—southern Ontario gets its oil from Venezuela, Saudi Arabia and US sources, whereas the northern jurisdictions get it from western Canada by rail—where that fuel is being refined, when it’s being refined. I do note that the member in the bill does suggest that the OEB would have this opportunity to have different pricing zones throughout the province. That obviously wouldn’t solve the issue that the member has with respect to the price of gas being different on his trip to Queen’s Park. But, again, that’s probably something that we can look at.

As I said, we do want to see this move forward. We do want to see this get to committee. We want to have a fulsome debate at committee. I think it’s important that we bring experts in on this, that we look at other jurisdictions to see what has been a success and what has been a failure, and that we bring those observers in who have said that the taxpayer will pay a heavy burden for regulation that is done incorrectly. We also know that part of the reason why we’re on this side of the House and why the NDP is now official opposition is because the people of Ontario were very frustrated and very angered by incorrect regulation—regulation that has cost Ontario taxpayers for many, many years and will cost Ontario taxpayers for many, many years.

Just in closing, again, I understand the member’s passion for this. It is, as I said, something that, whilst I was a federal member of Parliament, we heard constantly about. There were constant investigations by the Competition Bureau. We could never come to a real resolution of what would be the best way forward. We heard from other jurisdictions, individuals from Newfoundland and Labrador who complained that the maximum price that was put on their gas led to overpaying for fuel.

Let’s get it to committee. Let’s see if we could do it better. But ultimately, Mr. Speaker—Madam Speaker, excuse me; I’m sorry about that, Madam Speaker—if we can’t do this right, then I don’t think the member would be surprised that, in the final analysis, I personally would not vote for something that costs the Ontario taxpayers more. We have an obligation to send it to committee and do it right. I look forward to doing that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Speaker, good afternoon. I can completely understand the previous member’s confusion with regard to recognizing you because you are the spitting image of the member from Windsor—Tecumseh. It is remarkable how difficult it is, just the contrast between the both of you.

Laughter.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I’m just being a little playful.

Speaker, I want to commend the member from Timmins for his tenacity, his passion to reintroduce this bill. Consumer interest is what he’s trying to protect, and pricing and transparency are what he’s bringing through this private member’s bill. I will be touching back on those.

But I just want to take you on a walk, as a matter of fact, though Ontario this morning. I didn’t get all communities,

but this morning on GasBuddy: in Hagersville, the cheapest in Ontario, 109.6; Sarnia, 115.9; Ottawa, 117.9; Hamilton, 119.4; same thing for Windsor; Toronto, 119.9; same thing for London; same thing for Barrie.

Now we're starting to see an increase: Kitchener-Waterloo, 123.9; Sturgeon Falls, 124.9; Niagara-on-the-Lake, 128.9.

Now we're heading into northern Ontario: Sault Ste. Marie, 130.9; Little Current, 131.9; Elliot Lake, 133.9; Sudbury, 137.9; Kenora, 139.6; Wawa, 139.9; White River, 141.9; Marathon, 143.9; Thunder Bay, 144.6; Manitouwadge, 148.9—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Wait a second.

That's a 40-cent difference in those areas.

My friend from Kiiwetinoong just informed me that most of the gas stations in his area, who have a lack of roads and are challenged to bring their gas into their communities through fly-in—it ranges from \$2.25 to \$2.75 per litre.

Do we need this bill? Absolutely. Do we need to have it in committee? Yes, we do. What we don't need is for this government to shelve it and have it collecting dust. We need to have this discussion.

I've heard many nice words over many months that we are going to be challenging ourselves in order to have a discussion in regard to gas prices. People in northern Ontario have been wanting to have this discussion for a very, very long time. You want to talk about Ontario priorities? Here's one of them. We are finally talking about something that is going to affect people in Ontario and dramatically change their lives.

We all know that there's going to be another long weekend coming up—and everybody in northern Ontario knows what's happening—where you're planning to either escape or go into town. And hunting season is coming up. Oh, my goodness. What is going to happen? I'll tell you what's going to happen, Speaker. The prices are going to go up. Why are they doing it? Maybe because we have several avid hunters who want to go moose calling, go out hunting. You're going to load up on your four-wheeler, you're going to load up on your trailer, you're going to load up on your three-quarter ton and you're going out to the bush.

M^{me} France Gélinas: And your boat.

Mr. Michael Mantha: And your boat. And the generator.

What else do you bring in the bush?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: A camper.

Mr. Michael Mantha: And my camper, of course.

That's the way of life in northern Ontario. That's what we do. And there are a lot of people from southern Ontario who come up north and benefit from the resources that we have here, and we welcome them.

Mr. John Vanthof: Some of them bring their gas.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Yes, that's true. My friend from Timiskaming–Cochrane just brought up a good point. I've seen many of them travelling back on Highway 69, going back north. You see those four-wheelers with their boats

and trucks and you see those five, six, seven or eight cans of gas that are in the back of the truck, strapped down with tie wraps, which is even more dangerous.

We need to really challenge ourselves with this discussion. Again, I want to stress the point. I was happy to hear, I think, that the government will be supporting this bill—yay. But let's make sure that this bill does not just go into committee; let's make sure that it gets there and that we have the discussion and we invite the individuals in so that we can really get to the root cause and settle this once and for all.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thanks for allowing me to rise and speak today.

I don't even know where to start when it comes to gas prices. Gas prices have been a huge issue for us in Ontario and right down in my riding of Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Fort Erie. Just today in Niagara we're looking at gas prices around \$1.30 a litre. People in our community need to drive their cars, and the price of gas is seriously hurting our families.

We know it's the refineries that are making all the money. There is zero transparency, and we know they are gouging the people—I want to say this—of Ontario every day at the pump. We know that the price of a barrel of oil does not always change the price of gas. We've said this before: When the price of oil crashed, we didn't see the same drop at the pumps. We didn't when it went down to 28 cents a barrel. This means that when oil started to rise, we knew gas prices were going to go even higher.

It really doesn't matter how much the refineries are making.

People are being gouged, and we have zero transparency in the province of Ontario on how gas prices are set. They're paying insane rates for gas, and that comes out of the money that they need to put a roof over their head and food on the table, pay for their high hydro bills. Whether it's a senior filling up their tank or a family driving to a hockey tournament, the price of gas is beginning to weigh heavily on people.

1450

This is the one that has already been discussed—but we all know what happens. On the weekend, I go to a number of events in my riding. Consistently, the constituents say, “Gatesy, when are you going to do something about these gas prices?” They say it all the time. Well, I think my colleague from Timmins has brought forward a great start for dealing with outrageous gas prices. This government has refused to address gas-price gouging in any substantial way, instead focusing their time on settling scores in Toronto.

When gas prices are this high, hard-working people in our community are reminded, every time they start their engine, how unaffordable it is to drive in the province of Ontario, from the north to Toronto to down in Niagara.

If this government wants to be for the people, then they should support this bill right now. The province does have the power to deal with sky-high gas prices.

We've all seen the crazy changes in the gas prices when a long weekend comes up. I challenge anybody, on either side of the House: How many haven't seen it in your community on a long weekend? I go to bed in Niagara, and it's \$1.20 a litre. I wake up in the morning to start my long weekend, and it's \$1.35. That's happening right across the province of Ontario, and it should be stopped.

I'm going to finish by addressing one of the PC guys who talked earlier about competition. I'll tell you what's happening in the gas and oil companies.

I don't have a lot of time. They didn't give me a lot of time to speak here.

Down in Niagara, we have 11 independents. The independents would keep the price of gas down lower. Do you know what the oil companies have done to them? They set up two service stations where they undercut everybody by 20 and 30 cents, to put the independents out of business. That's what's going on. It happened in St. Catharines. It went on, not for a week. You know, sometimes you get into a gas war for a week. This went on for two years, as they tried to put the independents out of business.

So we have to support this. Let's take it to committee. Let's have the debate about this. Ontarians cannot afford to be gouged at the pump any longer.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm really pleased that the member from Timmins decided to bring this bill back.

The price of gas is something that I hear about throughout my riding of Nickel Belt. I know that we've debated this before. The Minister of Finance, the MPP for Nipissing, the Honourable Vic Fedeli—I will quote him. He said, "I'm a northern boy. I've been there 61 years"—I guess 62 now—"and I can tell you that this is a lifelong issue, gas prices in the north...."

"We understand that there is a huge disparity...."

"We just don't have the same transit opportunities...."

"To have this variation in fuel prices is hurtful to us."

He ends by saying how important the fact that our fuel prices are so much higher is for his party. He recommends that the bill be sent to committee. I hope it will be sent to committee so that we work on it.

I also see that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is here. I'd like to quote him.

He said, "I'm going to be supporting his bill.... I want to thank him for this debate."

"Gas price gouging is, I think, an issue that we need to address. I think people on this side of the House agree that has to happen.... I have to tell you, I know how mad people get about gas gouging in my riding, but prices in northern Ontario were sky high; there was no question" about that.

"In Leeds-Grenville, motorists have been subjected to wild price hikes in one area while communities that are nearby to us, other communities in eastern Ontario, pay much less."

He goes on with all sorts of sayings that they have out there: "10-cent Tuesday," "Way-Up Wednesday"—you

get the idea—that wild fluctuation. He basically goes on to say that "people call it gouging."

He goes on to say, "I do agree that getting the bill into committee is a good step, so that we can talk about it and look at some of the suggestions that the member has talked about in his 12 minutes...."

Is it perfect? No. It looks like the government is going to agree to send this into committee.

I'll urge for one thing: The prices of gas in Nickel Belt right now—if you go to the Water Shed, if you go to Foleyet, it's \$1.50. Don't give those people false hope. If you have no intention of doing anything with that bill in committee, stand up right now and vote no. If you are sending that bill to committee, there are tens of thousands of people in northern Ontario who will be counting on each and every one of us to actually do something, to give those people a voice, to let their ideas be brought forward. Members of your caucus have supported this going to committee. It looks like it will be going to committee, but don't give them false hope. We need you. We need all of us in this House to be committed to looking at price gouging. It happens throughout Ontario. It happens in Niagara; it happens in rural and northern Ontario. It has to be looked at. We have an opportunity to do this. Let's get this done. Don't vote to have it die in committee. Vote for action.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Timmins has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to thank all those people who participated in the debate. I know a lot of members would have liked to have participated in this debate, to be quite honest, because it's something we all feel acutely in our own ridings. No matter where you live in this province, this is an issue. I'm encouraged that the government is indicating that they're going to support this at second reading and allow it to go to committee.

I just want to again say for the record, I'm perfectly okay and New Democrats are perfectly okay in amending this bill. If there's a better way of doing it, let's do that. We don't have a problem. But let's agree there are a couple of principles. The principles are, you've got to get rid of those gas spikes on weekends. That's just crazy. We can't allow that to happen. You've got to make sure that there's not this huge price differential of 40 cents a litre in this province that currently exists. As I said before, you can sell a case of beer in Kenora for the same price as Cornwall. We certainly can find a way to equalize the price of gas across this province without having to throw up the medium price. We need to guard against that.

We need to protect ourselves, should this government decide to move forward with their promise to reduce gas prices as far as taxes because of what you're doing with cap-and-trade. We need to make sure that anything that is saved on that side stays in the people's pockets. That ain't going to happen unless we regulate it in some way.

The last point I want to make is about the comment that was made by the member across the way in regard to contractual terms to have no effect. The whole purpose of that clause is not to say that contracts should be broken.

What it's meant to say is that companies are going to be watching this debate, and if they think this bill is going to pass third reading at one point and become a bill, they're going to sign contracts where they're going to increase the price of gas in anticipation of this bill passing. So this is to make sure that they don't have the power to do that, to protect themselves from whatever increase may happen as a result of this bill passing.

I look forward to the support of all sides of the House on this. Let's send it to committee and let's finally, once, all of us stand up in this House and do something to protect the consumer.

VETERANS

Mr. Daryl Kramp: I move that, in the opinion of this House, a monument should be erected on the grounds of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to honour the brave men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces who fought during the war in Afghanistan; and to stand as a testament to the sacrifices made by our troops.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Today, I would hope that this House of democratically elected Ontarians support the planned Queen's Park Afghan memorial to members of the Canadian Forces who fought in Afghanistan. As such, today I am very, very proud to speak further on this important recognition of our heroes, people who hail from across this province and across every part of this great nation from sea to sea to sea. They were and they are our sons, our brothers, our fathers, our sisters, our mothers.

In my previous career as an elected federal member of Parliament, I had the privilege to attend the repatriation ceremonies, where I joined others to welcome home those whose lives were lost in Afghanistan. CFB Trenton, of course, is 30 minutes from where I live, and so many of these members I knew personally, from over the years of contact with them.

Solemnly, I met with the families and I grieved with them on the tarmac at CFB Trenton before the long ride of their loved ones along the Highway of Heroes to Toronto. For those of you who have ever had the opportunity to be exposed to that ride, it is a most moving experience. I know it will certainly linger in my heart, and for those who have observed that, for a lifetime.

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Historically, Canadians rise and have risen to support and honour those affected in the face of tragedy. It's the Canadian way. It's the reason Canadians are so universally respected.

Canadians distinguished themselves in the aftermath of the 9/11 attack in the US, in which over two dozen of our fellow citizens were killed by these terrorist madmen. In Newfoundland, we showed compassion, of course, to the thousands stranded over the Atlantic after the attack, even made more public now with the play *Come From Away*

and others that have memorialized the tremendous contributions that Canada has made.

Of course, across Canada we have also vowed to stand with all of our allies from across the globe in areas where democracy is threatened. For members of the Canadian Forces, their boots on the ground and in the air distinguished their efforts to remove the Taliban as the government of Afghanistan, which had given cover to Al Qaeda terror training camps.

So, yes, our forces fought many terrorists, and too many have, sadly, paid the ultimate price. Some still pay the price here at home—we can't forget that—through their injured bodies and their souls and their minds.

This is for all who bravely fought and served, so that those who gave all—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I apologize to the member. I would like to readjust the members and their positioning so that we can continue with your presentation, sir.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Oh!

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I apologize to the member for interrupting his presentation and thank him for returning to his own seat. The member may continue.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm a left-hander, so I guess I'm comfortable with this now.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Is that "left-winger"?

Mr. Daryl Kramp: I can assure you that is not the case. But, you know, left-handed people do most things right.

Our forces: Going back to what really, really is critically important, of course, is the memory of the sacrifice and the tradition that we cherish to honour our men and women. Because too many of them not only paid the ultimate price, but as I said, too many of them still pay the price afterwards, those who have returned damaged in so many ways.

So for all of our forces, for those who bravely served and fought, for those who came home and those who did not, for their families and for their loved ones, for their neighbours and their fellow citizens, that's what this Afghan memorial will do. It will be erected in their honour in the Queen's Park precinct. It will recognize the Canadian spirit that previously fought in great conflicts—that's our history; that's our tradition—all the way right back to the establishment of Upper Canada, today's Ontario, in 1791, for causes that we knew then and we still continue to heed today as worthy components on our road to nationhood.

Today, across the aisles of this Legislature, we have the opportunity to collectively embrace those citizens who represented us overseas since 2001, and those citizens here as well, in support of their families, in their opposition to terrorists who target us, our friends, our neighbours, our values, our principles and our beliefs. They have attacked our innocents here and abroad. Certainly, we thank our armed forces for standing up for our valued principles.

As Premier Ford said of our Canadian heroes this past Tuesday, September 11, the 17th anniversary of the 9/11

attacks, “Today the world is a safer place thanks to their service and sacrifice.”

All of us here have had the freedom to be here in this chamber, to assemble, to dream, to aspire, to speak, because brave forefathers wanted the best for us today while risking their selves in yesterdays.

A lot of people say, “Well, what is a memorial? What is the purpose of a memorial, though?” Well, what it does—it doesn’t glorify conflicts; it glorifies the people and the spirit and the purpose and the sacrifice. They recognize that some amongst us have made courageous stands. They’ve put their own lives on hold and on the line to stand with the forces that seek to civilize the world, to make it safe, not for those whose blind allegiance to death, destruction and mayhem is meant to take the world back to the Dark Ages.

Today I ask you to think of our men and women who, in the line of duty, have had to miss a graduation ceremony, a funeral or the birth of a child, or sadly, of course, have made the ultimate sacrifice. I believe it is our duty as Ontarians to make totally public our display of appreciation, remembrance and support for those who fought on our behalf to oppose the terrorists who express open hatred of our open systems and, of course, the very aspect of democracy itself.

As Premier Ford said, “Our government is proud to pay tribute to all veterans of the war in Afghanistan” with this new memorial in their honour. I agree that it will stand as a testament to the bravery of our veterans and the sacrifices made by our troops. This memorial will forever honour our heroes of the war in Afghanistan, including the 159 Canadians who made the ultimate sacrifice.

You should know that when Canadian forces were deployed to the country, Afghani women could not vote. They were not even allowed to go to school. Education was only a dream. But as a result, we provided them with that opportunity and the doorway to equality, where they can participate in growth and processes within their own country, where they can make a difference. And so, yes, we have made a difference. We now have several Afghani women elected and playing roles in their Parliament in that short period of time.

As a federal member, I was privileged to welcome a number of them to Canada to participate in the sharing of the principles and the structures of democracy and our democratic institutions. I was the Canadian chair of GOPAC, the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption, at that time. Truly these women do and will play key leadership roles in their Parliament and the evolution of their society. Our men and women had a true *raison d’être* as they witnessed this change first-hand.

Regrettably, the horror of conflict has negatively affected not only our men and women in service but their families as well, as I have mentioned previously. The emergent and real effects of PTSD are seen and are prevalent across our great nation. Once again, I was proud to have the opportunity to play a role as part of a government that established centres of treatment for PTSD and other emotional challenges faced by members of our

armed forces. The memory of participating in the opening of the first site at CFB Trenton, accompanying then-Defence Minister Peter MacKay, is as fresh in my mind today as it was then. Assembled there were damaged veterans with their families, with caseworkers, with legislators. Truly, truly, we had to acknowledge the depth of their sacrifice.

As a personal aside, and as part of a historical relevance, my father was a World War II veteran. He served in the Princess Pats. Incidentally, Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry was the first regiment into World War II and the last out, and they were the first into Afghanistan and the last out.

When I take a look at every Canadian who has been so personally touched—I know I was also personally touched when the base command on the last day at the Bagram air base—I had done a lot of work with people returning all the time. When we were departing from Bagram, when Canadian forces were leaving, the Canadian flag and the Afghani flag were presented to me in a glass case by the base commander. Now, if that isn’t touching, and if that doesn’t strike you personally, then you don’t realize the depth of the sacrifice that we have made.

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For those who know and understand all of these sacrifices, we should be mindful of the consequences that affect each and every Canadian in so many ways that help shape the positive evolution as Afghan democracy continues to evolve.

Certainly, we welcome so many children to Queen’s Park to learn our history, to know, to appreciate, to understand, and I think they should have the opportunity as well to know, to learn, to understand and appreciate the true cost of freedom.

I welcome all members in this Legislature to assist, help, guide, promote, sponsor and honour the sacrifices of so many.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I’d like to continue where you left off. A number of us are sons and daughters of vets who served in the Second World War. My dad was an Algonquin and served in the Canadian military at the time of the Second World War, along with his brothers.

My uncle, I found out after he died, had nightmares until the day he died. That poor man was a flame-thrower operator, and my aunt said when he would go to bed at night, he’d wake up in a cold sweat quite often, just mortified because he could still smell the burning flesh of those who he had to utilize that instrument on. These men came back scarred, and there was no such thing as PTSD at the time.

All of us who grew up in that generation of 1940 to 1950—most of us were born in that particular period—our parents, our fathers and mothers, served in the armed forces and we grew up understanding what that was all about and why they chose to serve. Why did a little French boy in Timmins, Ontario, like his brother, decide to join the Algonquins and go fight a war halfway across the

world? In order to do what? It was because their country had called.

As a New Democrat, I understand that. I was in the armed forces myself. I'll admit here in the House, because I have immunity, I lied about my age to get into the armed forces. I was 15 years old and I joined first the militia, the Algonquin Regiment of Timmins. Those of you who know anything about the militia—we're often the first called into battle. The militia is often where you go if there's a crisis, in order to augment your armed forces to do what has to be done. As we know, in Afghanistan and other wars, it has been the militia that was called and a number of them went, served and died.

I was 15 years old. Why did I do that at 15? Because of what was instilled in me by my father, my uncle and the friends who I grew up with whose dads were vets, who never talked about war in the way that you see in John Wayne movies. They always talked about maybe getting a bottle of wine somewhere, finding eggs in somebody's barn. They talked about the funny stories. They never talked about what had happened to them, because they couldn't share with people who had never been in battle what battle was all about. I don't think anybody in this House can describe that adequately as well. So I decided when I was 15 to join the militia and then went into the regular armed forces and served in the Canadian Armed Forces for a short period of time.

I understand well as a social democrat—I have been a social democrat all my life, but I have always understood that at times we're asked to give back to our country in ways that people cannot imagine, having to go and stand in battle, hold a weapon and have to do things that you would never do in a civil society. It is not an easy thing for a soldier to pick up a gun with real bullets and fire at real people, because we're all human beings in the end.

I just have to say, all of us have seen the victims of Afghanistan. Le soldat Jack Bouthillier in Hearst, he was barely 19 years old, served with the Dragoons. His first day of deployment in Afghanistan, he was killed by an IED—19 years old. That young man from Hearst, he didn't have to go but he decided to do it because he felt there was a call by his country to do what his country needed him to do. That young man at 19, maybe 20 years old—I may have the year wrong but he couldn't have been very old—died on his first deployment.

I'm going to say something quite political here because this is something that I felt very keenly in the last election: When your Premier stood up and said New Democrats don't support the military—bullshit, quite frankly.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member will withdraw. And a reminder to all members that we must be parliamentary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I apologize, Madam Speaker. I withdraw. I shouldn't use that type of language. I apologize.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member is warned.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've been warned. I withdraw.

I had to use that, Madam Speaker, and I shouldn't have, but it was deeply offensive to many of us whose children are in the military—as we have people in our caucus now who have children in the military—and as people who have served in the military, such as myself and others who will speak from our caucus. For this caucus to be accused of not supporting the military was a gross injustice and, quite frankly, a really bad political trick, because I can tell you, I served. I understand what it's all about.

We as children of vets understand what our parents went through. They lived with the effects of war all their lives, and we understand far too well what that means. As a New Democrat, I am proud to support this particular motion, because all New Democrats stand with veterans and soldiers of all types in order to make sure that we recognize the valued contribution that they're called to make, that, quite frankly, they would rather not do.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? I recognize the Minister for Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: Thanks, Speaker. It's nice to see you in the chair this afternoon.

I'm truly honoured to rise on behalf of the residents of Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes to speak in support of this very important motion.

Today's debate is a reminder of something that I mention at every Remembrance Day service I attend: The act of remembrance, of honouring the sacrifices of our veterans and those serving today, is something we shouldn't only do on November 11. We have a duty 365 days a year to thank the men and women of the armed forces for the freedoms that we enjoy as Canadians.

In Afghanistan, the ultimate sacrifice was paid by 158 Canadian soldiers who lost their lives. Those losses hit home in my own riding, as they did in so many communities from coast to coast. Corporal Randy Payne of Gananoque, a member of an elite military police unit, lost his life on April 22, 2006, when a roadside bomb exploded. Three other soldiers in the convoy died that day with Corporal Payne, who was just 32 years old and left his wife, Jody, and their two children, Tristan and Jasmine, behind.

Just months later, on October 14, 2006, my riding lost a second soldier to the Afghan war. Private Blake Williamson of Kemptonville was one of two Canadian soldiers killed when their patrol was ambushed.

Speaker, while a dozen years have passed since Corporal Payne and Private Williamson were killed, their bravery is not forgotten by the people of Leeds and Grenville. We're heartbroken by the loss, but so proud of their service and that of the reservists from the Brockville Rifles regiment who served in Afghanistan.

As none other than the commander of the Canadian army, Lieutenant-General Paul Wynnyk, noted during the Brockville Rifles officers' mess dinner earlier this year, "The Brockville Rifles sent enough soldiers to Afghanistan to be awarded the theatre battle honour, which is not a distinction that was awarded to every reserve infantry unit and is particularly notable given the size of this unit."

Speaker, I'm sure you can understand why we are so tremendously proud of the work that the Brockville Rifles has done. No matter what side of the House—and I appreciate the comments earlier from the opposition House leader—and regardless of the position you take on issues, we have to agree on a debate like this today. We owe our ability to rise in this place to the selfless sacrifices made by the brave men and women of our Canadian Armed Forces. It's something that I'm very grateful for, and I thank them for their service every time I walk through that chamber door.

That's why I can think of no better place to build a monument to honour the Canadians who fought for freedom in Afghanistan than right here on the grounds of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I hope that all members this afternoon speak very freely and openly, that they support this motion and that we honour those brave men and women. We will remember them.

1520

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, let me take you back to September 3, 10 years ago. Members of the 2nd Battalion of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, the PPCLI, were on patrol in the Zhari district of Kandahar province in Afghanistan. A young soldier from Windsor, 23-year-old Andrew Grenon—a friend of my son—was on his second tour. Insurgents attacked the Canadians. Andrew and two of his buddies were killed and five others were injured. He died just days after receiving the Canadian Expeditionary Force's Command Commendation for bravery. Earlier, Andrew's actions had prevented the outbreak of a riot and he saved the lives of two other soldiers. I mentioned Andrew was on his second tour. He had been injured twice while serving in Afghanistan during his first tour.

His funeral was held 10 years ago yesterday. It was the biggest funeral in Windsor's history. Thousands of people lined the sidewalks as we left Our Lady of the Atonement parish and made our way to the cemetery.

His mother, Theresa Charbonneau, always lays a wreath at our annual Remembrance Day service at the city hall cenotaph. She attends most of the other memorial services for our veterans and Legion members as well.

Theresa is our Silver Cross Mother. As you know, Speaker, the Silver Cross, sometimes known as the Memorial Cross, is an award that's been granted since 1919. It's given to the loved ones of Canadian Armed Forces personnel who died in service. This award is granted by the federal government. Two provinces, Saskatchewan and British Columbia, have set an example I hope we here in Ontario will follow. They've introduced commemorative licence plates for the family members of fallen soldiers. These Silver Cross or Memorial Cross plates serve as a daily reminder of the sacrifices members of the military and their families have made for our country. It's a symbolic gesture. It doesn't cost much, but it sends a powerful message of respect for our military families.

So as I applaud the member from Hastings–Lennox and Addington for motion 18, for a memorial to those killed in Afghanistan, I would encourage the Ford administration to take a further step and follow the examples set in British Columbia and Saskatchewan. Let's introduce the Memorial Cross licence plates here in Ontario.

Speaker, let me close with a poem written by Andrew Grenon. He wrote it during his first tour in Afghanistan. It's called *Why We Fight*:

I've often asked myself why we are here.

Why my government actually agreed to send troops to this God-forsaken place.

There are no natural resources. No oil, gold, or silver.

Just people.

People who have been at war for the last 40 plus years.

People who want nothing more than their children to be safe.

People who will do anything for money; even give their own life.

I look into the eyes of these people.

I see hate, destruction and depression.

I see love, warmth, kindness and appreciation.

Why do we fight?

For in this country, there are monsters.

Monsters we could easily fight on a different battlefield, at a different time.

Monsters that could easily take the fight to us.

Surrounding these mud walls and huts is a country in turmoil.

A country that is unable to rebuild itself.

A country that cannot guarantee a bright future for its youth.

Why do we fight?

Because, if we don't fight today, on THIS battlefield, then our children will be forced to face these monsters on our own battlefield.

I fight because I'm a soldier.

I fight because I'm ordered.

I fight, so my children won't have to.

Speaker, to all our veterans, all the military personnel now serving, thank you for your service.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Smith: It's obviously a very emotional series of speeches that have happened.

I would like to talk about one gentleman in particular, Corporal Nick Bulger from Buckhorn. He joined the armed forces in 2000 and he served until 2003. Then he took some time off and actually went into the oil fields in Alberta, and had another calling, and rejoined in 2008. Nick was described as a gentle family man, quiet and fun-loving. Although he was a Detroit Red Wings fan, I think I can forgive him for that, as a Maple Leafs fan.

Nick had come from a small community in my riding: Buckhorn. In Buckhorn, the community centre started a program of sending care packages to our soldiers over in Afghanistan. After receiving one of the packages, Nick

sent a letter back and said: “Wow thanks so much for the message. So yes all of the boxes got here. Everyone and anyone that heard about them can’t believe the work” that the team did in Buckhorn so far for us. “Truly this was something that no one expected at all; not even me. We are actually going out tomorrow morning to distribute them to the rest of the guys. I have to say that the timing is great. Tomorrow is Canada Day. Let everyone know we thank you for your support.”

On July 3, 2009, Nick was travelling in an armoured vehicle with five other tactical soldiers near the Zhari district, about 60 kilometres southwest of Kandahar. Their mission was to protect Brigadier-General Jonathan Vance. Nick’s vehicle hit an IED. Nick and his five tactical team members were killed. Corporal Bulger was the 121st Canadian soldier killed in Afghanistan.

He left behind his wife, Rebeka, and his daughters, Brooke-Lynn and Elizabeth. At the time, they were four and two, respectively. They’re now 13 and 11. They have no memory of their father; they weren’t old enough.

The motion that has been put forward today to commemorate the Afghanistan soldiers is something that I support fully. I don’t believe that they have asked for too much from us. They have given so much for us.

Having this type of a memorial here at Queen’s Park, although it is something very, very small, will let Brooke-Lynn and Elizabeth know what their father had done and that his life meant something, that he gave to his country to show others what Canada can do, what Canada is all about and to improve the lives of other people.

I look forward to this motion passing today because I think it is very important that it does. I’m quite proud of the fact that it will be here at Queen’s Park.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I rise today with a heavy heart for a young gentleman who fought in the Afghanistan war from the city of St. Catharines: Dennis Brown, a very good friend of mine. Dennis Brown travelled down the Highway of Heroes to St. Catharines. He came home to his family. He gave the sacrifice of his life for our freedom to stand here today and speak in this House.

My son, Jonathan, fought in the Afghanistan war, in Operation Enduring Freedom. I’m a granddaughter; both my grandfathers fought in World War II.

This is very near and dear to my heart, this memorial for the brave men and women of our Canadian Forces who fought in the Afghanistan war. I am fortunate that my son came home. He fought in the war, the Afghanistan war. He has done three tours of duty. He has left his young family at home, as stated earlier from the government side. He was fortunate enough to be able to come home to the arms of his wife and his young daughter at six months old.

1530

Dennis Brown, from St. Catharines: His three boys honour him every Remembrance Day. They lay a wreath at his grave in memory of their father, Mr. Dennis Brown.

I, at this time, because I have the privilege to do this, thank him and say to every Canadian who fought in the Afghanistan war: Thank you. Thank you for all you did.

We must remember them. We must remember all: the past, and the men and women who fight now, to this day, across broader lakes—may it be land, air or sea.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I think this afternoon’s debate really reinforces how important it is for us to move forward on putting a memorial, a monument, here at Queen’s Park, a public acknowledgement of the sacrifice not only of the 159 Canadians who lost their lives while serving in Afghanistan, but the thousands of civilians and soldiers—to support individuals who were part of that very important history, really.

We’ve all raised our own personal examples. I want to talk about Corporal Matthew Jonathan McCully. Corporal Matthew Jonathan McCully of the 2 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group Headquarters and Signals, Communications and Electronics Branch unit—a very large, long title. What you need to know about Matthew McCully is that he was killed in action on May 25, 2007, west of Kandahar city in Afghanistan. He was the son of Valerie and Ron, brother of Shannon. Matthew came back to Orangeville, and we had a funeral for Matthew in 2007.

As moving and challenging as that funeral was for those of us who attended, I really want to talk about Valerie. Matthew’s mother, for the last 10 years, has spent a lot of her passion and energy to move forward on a park in Orangeville called Bravery Park. To her credit, they are very, very close to opening that park. Valerie did that because she understood the sacrifice that her son and many other individuals made while serving in Afghanistan. She wanted to acknowledge it publicly. She wanted to have a place where people could gather and remember and come together.

When Premier Ford asked me to lead a monument, a memorial, here at Queen’s Park, I was honoured, because I think it is so critically important that we not just talk about this on November 11, that we not just think about it one day a year, or one week when we’re wearing our poppies, but that we have an acknowledgement to those families, those friends, those individuals, to come together and to be able to remember. You can’t do that when you don’t have a place.

It’s one thing to do it on November 11, and it’s very important that we do it on November 11. But when we have a public area that acknowledges sacrifice, that acknowledges what has happened and the change that it has made in individual lives—the families, the friends, the communities—I think that sends a message. It sends a message that we acknowledge your sacrifice but we also want to say thank you and we also want to say, “We’re with you and we want to support you.” That’s why I’m very pleased to support this motion today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member from Hastings–Lennox and Addington has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and certainly thank you to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport for your leadership on this issue and helping to get this monument to Queen's Park with the support of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing—and to the member for Peterborough, so emotional.

To all of the members of the opposition who have responded in a manner that is not only fitting and appropriate and relatively non-partisan, but certainly emotional: I thank you very, very kindly for that. Truly it is and has been heartening to hear the comments from across both sides of this House. Obviously, this is an issue that's deeply personal to every Canadian whatever your background. It crosses every party line and every demographic and every gender that there is.

Might I just say that actions do speak louder than words, though, so for my last minute that I have remaining, I would just ask for a moment of silence. Please join me.

The House observed a moment's silence.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Consideration of private members' public business has concluded before the expiry of the two and a half hours' time allotted. This House is therefore suspended until 4:04 p.m., at which time I will be putting the questions to the House.

The House suspended proceedings from 1538 to 1604.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We will deal first with ballot item number 10, standing in the name of Mr. Walker.

Mr. Walker has moved private member's notice of motion number 17. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

FAIRNESS IN PETROLEUM PRODUCTS PRICING ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ EN MATIÈRE D'ÉTABLISSEMENT DU PRIX DES PRODUITS PÉTROLIERS

Mr. Bisson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 7, An Act to regulate the price of petroleum products / Projet de loi 7, Loi réglementant le prix des produits pétroliers.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 98, the bill will be referred to which committee?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Legislative Assembly, please.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Do we all agree that the bill will then be referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly? Agreed.

VETERANS

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Kramp has moved private member's notice of motion number 18.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STANDING ORDERS

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Todd Smith: Thank you. It's a pleasure to be recognized this afternoon, Madam Speaker.

I move government notice of motion number 5.

I move that for the duration of the 42nd Parliament the standing orders be amended as follows:

That standing order 6(b) be amended by deleting the word "eight" and replacing it with the word "twelve"; and

That standing order 35(e) be amended by adding the words "and one independent member may comment for up to five minutes."; and

That standing order 43(a)(v) be amended by adding the words "or any other day that Routine Proceedings is scheduled for 1:05 p.m."; and

That standing order 43(d) be amended by deleting the word "Monday" and replacing it with the words "Monday or any other day that Routine Proceedings is scheduled for 1:05 p.m."; and

That standing order 47(b) be amended by adding the words "A motion to adjourn the House may not be moved during this debate, except upon unanimous consent of the House."; and

That standing order 98(e) be deleted—and be deleted. Thank you—just deleted once.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Smith has moved that for the duration of the 42nd Parliament the standing orders be amended as follows:

That standing order 6(b) be amended—

Interjection: Dispense.

Interjection: No, I want to hear it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):—by deleting the word "eight" and replacing it with the word "twelve"; and

That standing order 35(e) be amended by adding the words "and one independent member may comment for up to five minutes."; and

That standing order 43(a)(v) be amended by adding the words “or any other day that Routine Proceedings is scheduled for 1:05 p.m.”; and

That standing order 43(d) be amended by deleting the word “Monday” and replacing it with the words “Monday or any other day that Routine Proceedings is scheduled for 1:05 p.m.”; and

That standing order 47(b) be amended by adding the words “A motion to adjourn the House may not be moved during this debate, except upon unanimous consent of the House.”; and

That standing order 98(e) be deleted—only once.

I return to the member.

Hon. Todd Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to notify the Chair this afternoon that I will be splitting my time with the deputy government House leader in our leadoff to this motion.

It is an honour to rise and speak to the government's substantive motion before the House this afternoon.

Over the course of the entirety of this Parliament—now in only its sixth sessional week—much has been made of the democratic process currently under way in Ontario. During the summer session, members of the opposition ran so afoul of this House's practices and conventions for conduct that we had to add whole new words to what is considered unparliamentary in this House.

This morning, we had the beginning of another historic precedent. Over the first six weeks in this House, we may end up seeing as many reasoned amendments as this House has seen in any single Parliament over the last 35 years.

1610

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You did that when you were in opposition.

Hon. Todd Smith: I can tell you we didn't.

Members opposite will say that it's their right. And they're right: So it is. I don't dispute that. But experienced members in this House know that the main purpose of reasoned amendments is to keep the government from putting time on the clock to pass legislation. Its intent, therefore, is not to encourage opposition but to encourage obstruction.

While they are in effect, no debate on certain legislation can take place in this House. If members seek to keep the House from hours of debate—and over the summer session, the members opposite caused 16 hours of delays on bills. That's what they've accomplished—16 hours. Congratulations. If they want to do that, then the government reserves the right to make up the time. That's what this motion before the House seeks to do, in the least invasive way possible, and thus the motion is even able to make concessions to the independent members of the House, who are excluded from some of its proceedings under some provisions of the current standing orders.

With regard to the first item included in the motion, an expansion of—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Sorry. I heard something that was quite unparliamentary. If the member—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The House will come to order, please.

If the member feels that they said something unparliamentary, they'll please withdraw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I'll withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Please stand and withdraw.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Withdraw. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Please continue.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The whole House will come to order.

Hon. Todd Smith: With regard to the first item included in the motion, an expansion of night sittings, the rationale is pretty simple. It's only been until recently that this House sat very little after 6 in the evening. Our standing orders, unlike those of the federal House of Commons, do not permit a minister to move a motion to extend an afternoon debate through the dinner hour. Fans of great Commons debates—and I know I've got one sitting behind me—will know that division bells often ring in the mother Parliament as late as 10 p.m. Concessions around night sittings were only recently made, and this motion does not reverse the vast majority of those changes. It simply extends the House's current powers from the last eight sessional days to the last 12 sessional days.

Members opposite will know that the House remains the master of its own affairs and must pass a motion to have those sittings. Nothing about this motion changes the House's powers in that regard. It simply creates greater opportunity for them to be used, Madam Speaker.

While I don't have a crystal ball, anyone who watched how this place ran during the summer would come to the conclusion that more delays and more obstructions are likely to be forthcoming, but the House must have the ability to do its work, and that work is to pass legislation. If we end up in a situation where a number of bills have to be passed in the final days of a session, the House must have the resources at its disposal to do so. Members will have the right to decide whether the House should have those powers when this motion comes to a vote.

It should be noted, by the way, that the request for more night sittings actually came from a great number of my caucus colleagues on this side of the House, who like to work. I'm proud of that reaction from them, because their reaction to what looks like will be an unprecedented level of obstruction in this House was actually to make sure the House had more time to debate, not less. It was to ensure that the House considered more questions and that members on all sides had more time to debate the important pieces of legislation that we will be faced with. That's important to me as well, Madam Speaker.

I'm now one of three members in this place who have an official role in the two ceremonies that create a separation of powers between the House and the crown. As one of those three members, in addition to the Speaker and the Premier, I take this role as a guardian of this House's rights very seriously. That's why, when we were considering amendments to the standing orders for this motion over the course of the short recess that we had, we wanted to ensure that we were debating extensions of the House's existing practices or conventions or dealing with inherent contradictions that we'll be faced with in the existing standing orders.

While we weren't able to deal with all of the contradictions and conflicts in the existing standing orders, we were able to deal with the one where the House had experienced the greatest disruption to this point, which was the conflict caused by two different standing orders in the section which deals with private members' business. All of the members of the House just went through that experience a couple of moments ago.

The standing orders set out a prescribed length of time for private members' business in the schedule. That was fine when the House had three recognized parties, but as you know, we now have two recognized parties in the House. As a result, we have a 31-minute suspension in the middle of Thursday afternoons, during which the House can neither debate nor divide over any issue. We wanted to fix that problem, and that's what this is intended to do.

That's the immediate problem that was created by standing order 98(e), but there's another potential conflict that the composition of this House exemplifies, and the House can justifiably pre-empt this conflict.

At present, there are just two recognized parties in the House, but there are members of this House who represent four political parties which are recognized by Elections Ontario. If at any point all four of those parties were to have recognized party status in the Legislature, standing order 98(e) would require the House to adjourn a debate in the middle of a third private members' bill or motion because the time allotted to the individual member in each of the caucuses would then exceed two and a half hours.

It's the government's position that the time allotted to private members' business, as governed by standing order 98(a), is sufficient to ensure the House protects the right of private members to debate business on Thursday afternoon.

More importantly, it also grants the House sufficient flexibility, should its membership during the course of the 42nd Parliament expand, to include three or four recognized parties and maintain equal treatment for each of the caucuses.

As I have previously stated, there are other conflicts and contradictions in the standing orders, and I look forward to seeking the House's guidance and that of my fellow House officers to ensure that they're dealt with in a fair manner.

Similarly, as my office was reviewing the summer session here, we looked at two incidents that occurred that resulted in the start of afternoon proceedings being moved

to 1 p.m. You may recall that we moved from the start which is traditional on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 3 p.m., to 1 p.m. on those days. We're here for the duration of the sessional days as defined by the standing orders; however, situations always come up which may require more time. In the event that afternoon proceedings are moved up to 1 p.m. for whatever reason over the course of this Parliament on a day when an opposition day motion is scheduled, the House will simply operate as though the opposition day were being held on a Monday, when the House usually returns at 1 p.m.

Having sat on the opposition side of the House, I understand that opposition days present one of the few times available for the opposition to debate issues which may not be before the House as either a bill or a motion. It was important that, in the event House proceedings were moved to 1 p.m. for whatever reason, the rules of those debates were known to the House in a way that made them consistent with other opposition day motions which take place on days where afternoon proceedings begin earlier. The overall content and amount of time dedicated to those debates will remain untouched by the House. This will create the potential that the House could see more time dedicated to other business as well and is therefore in keeping with the spirit of the changes to the standing orders around night sittings.

Now we'll deal with what, I'm sure, will be the most contentious items included in the motion; that is, removing motions to adjourn the House from time allocation debates.

It's worth noting that the House already limits motions to adjourn in two different places. Standing order 46(a) states that motions to adjourn the House may not be moved prior to routine proceedings, effectively barring them from being moved in the morning. Standing order 98(h) likewise limits the ability of members to move adjournment of the debate during private members' business, which we just experienced. All this does is offer similar treatment to time allocation motions as the standing orders already extend to private members' business.

It's worth noting that in both cases these debates have distinct standing orders, which gives them certain rules which stand apart from the rules which are observed for debate on general government business. Twice in the summer session, the government invoked time allocation, and in both cases a debate under standing order 47 took place in the morning prior to routine proceedings, during which adjournment of the House couldn't be moved anyway.

Nothing will prevent a member who seeks to make a point regarding the use of time allocation from moving adjournment of the debate during the debate. Both that motion and the subsequent division bells will remain as they're envisioned by the standing orders. The reasoning for this motion is simply the efficient use of the House. It's to ensure that as much debate takes place as possible in here, not as little.

1620

Members opposite will argue that time allocation limits debate. You can argue that, but time allocation is itself a

debate, envisioned under the standing orders. You can understand why opposition members don't like time allocation—I sure didn't like it when I was in opposition—but we have to distinguish, as members have failed to do with other issues currently before this House, between those articles that are included in our democratic rules but may be rare or unpopular, and those actions that are clearly outside the rules.

For the most part, our standing orders are fairly comprehensive. They're almost restrictive in some senses because they only envision a House and a committee that would function with three parties. Those issues with the standing orders—like the problem addressed in this motion, with the remedy to standing order 98(e)—will have to be contended with by the House. Some, as may be the case with some committees, can be dealt with by the House leaders—and we had a discussion today about that very subject at our House leaders' meeting—or by their relevant subcommittees, but some will require a decision by the House. That's what we have here.

I'd like to point out that the member opposite, my fellow House leader, the member from Timmins, Mr. Bisson, asked the government to pass a substantive motion and put some firmness into the schedule instead of simply dealing with House sittings ad hoc, as he accused us of doing earlier this summer on a couple of different occasions. I know on August 7, the member said, "I know what it says for substantive motions, but this is a little bit out of the ordinary. In my 28 years, I've never seen the government change the time of the House and I would argue that makes it substantive." That was the end of Mr. Bisson's quote from earlier this summer.

In the event that House sittings are moved from 3 p.m. to 1 p.m. on a Tuesday or a Wednesday, this motion provides the House with stable rules going forward for any proceedings which occur on that day, while also providing it with the ability to be flexible, and gives further consideration to orders and debates before the House. But I want to point out that that flexibility is necessary for the House.

As I mentioned, yesterday was our 20th sessional day. I know it seems like a lot more than that, but we've been here for 20 sessional days in the chamber and at the Legislature. After 20 sessional days, we have had six reasoned amendments, and notice of another one this morning. In no 20-sessional-day-span that my office could find going back to the 1980s has this House ever seen the use of eight reasoned amendments. It's never happened before in the last 30 years. Some among the members opposite have suggested that it's going to be a continual and constant event here in the House, and the independent members have indicated that, really, that's the only tool they have at their disposal, so it's something that we should get used to. That's their right, Madam Speaker; nobody's questioning that. This motion doesn't address reasoned amendments because of that, because it is a tool that's at their disposal. I know we were accused of using it earlier on in my debate, but we rarely used reasoned amendments, if at all, during my previous seven years here in the Legislature.

What this does provide the House with is greater flexibility to find the time to debate questions before it. That's what we were all sent here to do. Instead of avoiding debate or questions before it, as the opposition has seemed intent on doing to this point, we actually want to debate more. We want to have the opportunity to hear those different voices in the Legislature. We have 75 members of the PC government; we have 40 members of the NDP; there are seven members of the Liberals; and, of course, for the first time ever, we have the leader of the Green Party in the Legislature. So I think it's important to make sure that we hear those different voices in the Legislature, and we're making accommodation to hear those voices.

I think it's important to make a distinction, for the purposes of this motion, between those means of dissent and opposition as recognized by the standing orders and those means that exist outside of them. This is especially important in light of what happened yesterday. There was what struck me, at least, as a fairly transparent attempt by some members opposite to prevent a minister of the crown from introducing a bill, introducing a piece of legislation, and that's not a method of dissent or opposition that's recognized by the standing orders. Where possible, the standing orders are supposed to allow for the greatest amount of debate to take place, and for the most members possible to participate in the decision on a question.

Let's examine what happened yesterday and why this motion is necessary. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing got to his feet to introduce a bill. The members opposite, through both interjections and their questions yesterday, made it quite clear that it was their intent to oppose the bill. That's fine. You're allowed to oppose the legislation. As a matter of fact, as members of the opposition, we opposed almost every single piece of legislation that the previous Liberal government brought forward. They are Her Majesty's loyal opposition, and it's their job to hold the government to account. As a matter of fact, it's their right and it's their obligation. In fact, they could have exercised that right when a division was forced—

Mr. David Piccini: It's four o'clock; there she goes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I will remind all members that there is a debate going on, that we should be able to hear it, that they will come to order and that we are not to make comments about who is or is not here in the Legislature. That's unparliamentary—a reminder, please.

The member can continue.

Hon. Todd Smith: Thank you, Speaker. Just speaking on the opposition's duties to hold the government to account, that's what we're encouraging here: more debate in the Legislature. As a matter of fact, what we're proposing today adds an additional 40 hours of debate per session in this Legislature. It actually proposes an additional three weeks of debate per session in this Legislature.

What we're proposing here today is a greater opportunity for the opposition to voice their opposition to what the government is doing. Whether they choose to do that or

not is another thing. They may choose to bang their desks and leave without being here to vote against the very legislation that they're opposed to. They may choose to bring in reasoned amendments and not actually debate the legislation. They may choose to sit on their hands. I know the party opposite has sat on their hands many, many times in my previous seven years here in the Legislature. Many times they voted with the Liberal government of the day on some very contentious pieces of legislation that have dug a very, very deep hole in our province's finances. That's their choice as opposition members. If they don't want to hold the government to account and if they want to prop up the government, we'd be more than happy to have your support. I know that the previous Liberal government loved to have the support from the NDP. They had it 97% of the time that there was a vote in this Legislature. The NDP propped up the Liberal party, but that's their choice.

Madam Speaker, we want to give them the opportunity to use that time how they see fit. If they have problems with our legislation, this will give them 40 more hours per session, an extra three weeks to consider—an extra three weeks that isn't costing anybody anything. It's built into our sitting days here in the Legislature and the members can use those days as they see fit. They can be the opposition or they can support us, because what we want to do is get this province back on track, make sure that we're dealing with the problems that the previous Liberal government created, fixing those problems, fixing our economy, creating good jobs and, at the same time, putting more money back into the pockets of taxpayers, and fixing the health care crisis that was created by the previous Liberal government. These are all things that we want to do, bringing trust and accountability back to Queen's Park.

I can tell you that the act of the members standing in their place to face down questions with which they have an inherent disagreement is not only envisioned by the standing orders, Madam Speaker, it's encouraged. The repeated beating of desks in an attempt to interrupt a proceeding and prevent the House from conducting its business is not.

I also believe that standing in my place and casting a nay vote is a greater statement of opposition than anything I could possibly strike my desk with. We saw a lot of striking of desks in here yesterday and a lot of people being ejected one by one. We had a number of members opposite who were named and were no longer allowed to participate in the proceedings. They weren't even able to vote against the very bill that they were opposing in this House.

1630

That ability to cast a vote is our primary reason for being here. It's what all of our members in our constituencies voted for us to do. That's why they sent you here. That's why they sent me here: to be here to vote, to cast a vote. Absolutely; it's to be here to vote.

We are opening the door to more and more debate. We are opening—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): A reminder to all members that the crosstalk is not only not helpful, it is counterproductive, and that both sides will have the chance to discuss this issue. I look forward to hearing that from the members who will be speaking. Are we good? Okay.

Please continue.

Hon. Todd Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The House has questions on which it must debate and decide, including the questions included in this motion here. The standing orders of this place provide members with ample opportunity to oppose or support anything that's currently on the floor. They provide for dissent, and this motion protects that right. But it also ensures that no one member can prevent another member from contributing to the debate. That right does, and should, belong only to the House.

The way that the rules of debate under standing order 47 currently work is they enable one caucus or even one member to effectively keep the rest of the House from debating for all but one second of the debate—barely long enough for our colleagues from Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas or Hastings—Lennox and Addington, or the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services and women's issues, to have their appropriate titles said by the Chair. A member could, under the current composition of standing order 47, get to their feet and speak for 59 minutes and move adjournment of the debate, which would cause the bells to ring for 30 minutes. The division would be taken. The member could then move adjournment of the House, and that cause another 30 minutes to be removed from the clock. By the time the bells were done and the division had been counted, the time for debate on the question would be over.

This House cannot allow for circumstances under which one member, and only one member, can contribute to a debate on the floor. That is, by definition, not a debate; it's a monologue. This does not align with our democratic values. Rather, it allows the opinion of one to define many.

Again, this motion that we are bringing forward this afternoon adds debate, 40 hours of debate per session—the equivalent of three weeks of debate. It allows independent members of the Legislature—we have some of them here—an opportunity to respond to ministerial statements. That's something that under the previous standing orders they weren't able to do. It gives them a voice, and I hope that they will be supporting this motion because I've been constantly hearing from their House leaders and their House staff that they want to play more of a role in the current composition of the Parliament. But because of the standing orders, the way they exist, they are very, very limited as to how much they can contribute to the debate here in the Legislature.

What we're doing here today by bringing forward this motion is allowing the independent members to have an opportunity to react to ministerial statements. I know a number of the members over there were ministers prior to the last election. They would bring forward very important pieces of information from their various ministries, and

then the other two opposition parties would have an opportunity to react to those ministerial statements. But under the standing orders as they currently exist, because they were reduced to non-party status in the Legislature, their voices have been silenced. What we're doing is opening the door to allow them to have their voices heard in the Legislature. I think that's a very, very fair thing.

Under the standing orders as they currently exist, there is very, very limited opportunity for the new member from Guelph to have a voice. What we're allowing now is for the member from Guelph, the leader of the Green Party, an opportunity to contribute and provide his feedback and his perspective to the statements that come from our various ministers when they present during routine proceedings in the afternoon. To me, that seems like a very fair accommodation, and I look forward to the member from Guelph supporting this motion here this afternoon because we're allowing him to speak; we're allowing him to voice his opinions on what our ministers are bringing forward on behalf of the crown.

This closes the gap on Thursday afternoons—this strange, bizarre occurrence that has been created because the third party has been reduced to—

Interjection: A minivan.

Hon. Todd Smith: I'm not going to say it.

They don't have official party status any longer. Nobody expected that that was going to happen, although there were some predictions in the polls prior to the last election that it could happen. But this will close the gap on this strange, bizarre 31-minute period in the afternoons on Thursdays after private members' business and going back to the orders of the day. That's what the cancellation or the elimination or the deletion of 98(e) in the standing orders will achieve: getting us back to government business and allowing us to debate more, which is why we were all sent here.

I encourage, when you do get to vote on this motion, those independent members of the Legislature, whether they be Liberal or Green, to support this motion because it does give them what they've been asking for—maybe not entirely what they've been asking for, but it does allow the members who are independents to participate more in routine proceedings.

I'll wrap it up with this: Inscribed on the very walls of the chamber, it reads, "Hear the other side." In virtue, this is what these reasoned amendments are seeking to do. Also inscribed in this chamber, it reads, "Let us be viewed by our actions." These amendments to the standing orders will ensure that democratically elected members of the House are actually able to debate, while fulfilling the purpose of this House: to pass legislation that benefits all Ontarians. We were all sent here to do better for the people of Ontario. Thus, I encourage the members of this House to support these reasoned amendments to the standing orders that will strengthen our procedures and our democratic processes in this House.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for your time, and I look forward to hearing from the member from King-Vaughan.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member for King-Vaughan.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that. Thank you to the House leader for having the courage to bring forth recommendations and reforms to our democratic system to create greater efficiency.

Madam Speaker, allow me to use this time to enumerate to the people of this province what we have done with respect to our legislative agenda so far in the few short months that we have been here. We were given a mandate by the people of this province to get to work. I know, contrary to how other governments have operated across party lines, we have seized the moment to get to work immediately with an urgent element of priority. We have accepted that in the province of Ontario, with the incredible bounty of resources and the talents of our people, we need to do more to get our province back on track. There are too many families in each of our ridings who depend on the leadership of this House, across party lines, to move the province forward.

I think that one thing that the New Democrats and—allow me to surmise—the Progressive Conservatives could agree on is that the last 15 years of rule under the Liberals, with great respect, have been most distressing to working people in this province, to our business community and, ultimately, to the jobs that depend on the competitiveness of our industry.

Madam Speaker, we got to work immediately with the Urgent Priorities Act. What we have done by passing this legislation was immediately doing three things that I'm very proud of, that in my riding and—I would submit—across the province, in every region of this province, the people support.

The first, of course, is ending the strike at York University, the longest strike in the history of this province. We did that. It's notable to have the Minister of Education here because we are rooted in the belief of enabling our young people to achieve their full God-given potential. That is the contrasting choice that the people of Ontario made in the last election.

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Now, we knew where the New Democratic Party stood on this issue. They opted, in their judgement, to put the interests of other interests ahead of young people and our students. They, of course, opposed our legislation to get young people back in the classroom. They're going to have to be held accountable for that, particularly the families of the members in the GTA; 45,000 young students in this province were horribly, adversely affected by the strike, the longest in the history of this country in post-secondary, on any campus in this country. Madam Speaker, we took action on that.

The second item we did, which we feel very strongly about, is that we brought renewed leadership to Hydro One. Obviously, we knew that we had to renew the leadership team at Hydro One, bring in an accountability act that put the ratepayers of this province in the driver's seat. We've done that by passing the Hydro One Accountability Act and, of course, through the leadership of the

Minister of Energy and the leadership of this cabinet and of the Premier, we brought forth renewed leadership so that we have members there who are actually going to be working hard in the interests of our ratepayers.

Madam Speaker, we also ended cap-and-trade. We announced the end of cap-and-trade. The Minister of the Environment often says that the cap-and-trade era is over in the province of Ontario. We believe in our judgement that eliminating any elements within the regulatory cycle—or legislative elements—that impede our businesses' ability to compete is something that we can do, an incremental step in the right direction, to help businesses grow, prosper and ultimately export into a global marketplace.

We took additional action: We passed, in the summer, the Better Local Government Act. I'm often reminded of a quote by Sir Winston Churchill. He says, "The price of greatness is responsibility," something that I'm sure we ought to all support, a quote by Sir Winston Churchill.

Part of that is showing up to work. You have to be in this House, vote in this House and exercise your duties as a member in this Legislature. The House leader yesterday spoke about what took place: the lack of decorum; the fact that members were ill-prepared to exercise the democratic rights that they're granted; and the fact that they have tens of thousands of constituents that depend on them to have a voice. When we, yesterday, reintroduced legislation, with substantive amendments to it, with respect to the Better Local Government Act, we expected all members to have skin in the game, to work with us constructively to improve the efficiency of council and ultimately ensure that the governance model within the fifth-largest economy in this country—that it is able to grow and ultimately is able to compete. We felt that obviously what was taking place in Toronto—the political dysfunction and the gridlock—was unacceptable.

The members of the New Democratic Party, supported by the Liberals, will have to be held accountable in the next election for why they put the interests of 20 political jobs—20 downtown New Democratic political friends on council—over the interests of working people who pay the bills, because that's ultimately the binary choice in this election. So it is rather regrettable that that is what they have chosen to do.

I said this yesterday in an interview—you know, I regret to admit this, Madam Speaker, but I have watched a disproportionate amount of QP television in my time. It is well known that I've done this over the years, and I just don't recall ever seeing the New Democratic Party stand up with such an element of dramatic theatrics. I will argue that you would not have won an Oscar, for the record. But the point, Madam Speaker, is they exited this House with great drama over the protection of 20 political jobs. Where the heck were the New Democratic members when the Liberal Party was cancelling and disconnecting seniors in the middle of the winter? You didn't do that then. Where the heck were you folks when they were cutting 1,300 nurses from the front line of health care? You didn't do that. You weren't doing that when they were closing the

most schools in the history of this country. But you do it over the protection of 20 New Democratic jobs? I find it unbelievable, the priorities of this party, the fact that this issue is the red line. This is your red line? You're prepared, in your judgement, to go back to your ridings—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): A reminder to all members that the crosstalk—well, they're interrupting their own members—is immensely unhelpful, and we would like to continue with the debate, please and thank you.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: Madam Speaker, look, we just came to this House—for some of us new members, it is obviously very humbling to be here. I take my role seriously, but I'll just say to you, Madam Speaker, that I find it flabbergasting that the New Democratic Party believes that their red line that they're not prepared to cross over is in the defence of downtown NDP jobs. I have not met a singular person in this province, not a solitary person in my riding, who says, "You know, I think the solution to the political gridlock that has manifested in the city of Toronto for a generation is to add more politicians." Yet the members opposite believe, in their judgement, that that is the solution.

Now, remember, they will make this about the invocation of section 33. The irony, Madam Speaker, as you will recall, as a fair arbiter of this House, is their opposition even before section 33 was invoked, because they believe in bigger government, full stop. That is the mission of the socialist agenda of your party, and you are a part of that.

Interjection.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I know. Exactly. Finally, something we can agree on, Madam Speaker.

Look, we know within our hearts that we must bring efficiency and reform to—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Okay. I'd like to remind all members to come to order for the third time, but I would also like to remind the member from King–Vaughan to speak to the motion, please.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and certainly I intend to do that. I think it is actually relevant for this House to understand where we have come from and where we are going, so if I can complete the thought of what are the accomplishments of this government vis-à-vis why we need to bring in these reforms to the standing orders, I think it is relevant, Madam Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): As long as you can make your way back.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: And I will certainly do that. I promise that, Madam Speaker.

Look, what we also did is we passed the introduction of the Cap and Trade Cancellation Act, which you know, Madam Speaker, is part of our plan to reduce gasoline prices by 10 cents. We've done this by eliminating 4.3 cents—already down—\$260 savings for the average family.

Now look, members opposite will ridicule this. They'll suggest it's not a meaningful savings, but I would argue, every incremental dollar, every single hard-earned dollar we can put back in the constituents' pockets is a good thing, and it is a success.

I do want to mention a few other items that I think are relevant. We invested \$25 million to combat guns and gangs, to deal with the recidivism, the violent crime that has taken place in the city of Toronto and, really, across the GTA for the past several months. It is most distressing to this government and, I would submit, to all members of this House. I know we should all agree that giving the tools to our law enforcement is within the public interest, and obviously the Minister of Community Safety led this initiative some weeks ago.

We also launched a constitutional challenge against the federal carbon tax, which we believe is outside the jurisdiction of the federal government, and which we believe will undermine competitiveness, which we believe will undermine the productivity of our economy.

Now, Madam Speaker, we talked today about the mandate we received, and of course we have expressed to you, with some context, what we have done to date, because we believe we need to get to work. I would argue, having only been here for several weeks, I suppose, of the House sitting, I'm very proud that we rolled up our sleeves in the service of the people, that we immediately got to work to help ensure that the people of this province are better off.

The people sent us here. We have received a mandate. We are humbled by that mandate, and obviously we've introduced today reforms that we believe will help ensure the efficiency of this Parliament, of this Legislature—and Madam Speaker, I get a sense that people are more pleased with where I'm going with this now. But I do think that in order to pass legislation, in order to bring forth our legislative agenda more expeditiously, we obviously want to move amendments to the standing orders that we believe will help get bills passed quickly, but at the same time, conversely, not impede any member's rights to communicate, to debate or to have a say in this Legislature, because we believe including independent members, including for the members of the opposition, is an inherently important, vital element of our healthy democracy in this country.

What the House leader has enumerated today, which I think is very good—and allow me, Madam Speaker, to go section by section within the standing orders, which I think will bring an element of gratitude to this House. We've introduced changes that could notionally add an additional 40 hours of debate time on government legislation in each session of this Parliament. That's the equivalent of adding almost three weeks of House time without a single dollar increase to the taxpayers of this province. I think that is a good thing. It's something that we all should support. It adds more debate, thoughtful debate, I hope. Less theatrical debates, I would submit, are in the interests of this Parliament, and I would argue that by doing so it allows greater scrutiny and discussion of the public policy items before this Legislature.

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We're also increasing the amount of time members will have to debate government legislation without changing the ability of opposition members to debate issues that matter to them. That is an important point.

I will conclude by noting that we're ensuring that independent members, as was mentioned by the House leader in the context of the member from Guelph, as an example, have the ability to make statements on government policy, which the current standing orders do not permit.

With respect to adding additional night sittings: I do want to speak about this, Madam Speaker. I'm a nighthawk. I'm prepared to work late into the night if we can get bills passed for the people of this province, and I hope that energy will be matched by the members opposite. Obviously, the people of this province said, "Get to work immediately," and that is exactly what we're doing. This motion only extends the current period for night sittings from eight days at the end of a session to 12. This, we believe, will allow us to get more legislative work done, and that is in the public interest. As I've communicated to you, Madam Speaker, and to all members of this House, we accept that there is a lot of work to do: yes, on the economy; yes, on improving our curriculum to make sure our young people can compete in the global marketplace; yes, on health care, to reduce the crippling wait times that have been left under the former Liberal government; yes, to ensure our young people can get good jobs and afford homes in the communities where they were raised. All of these things are the impetus or the driving force behind why we want to extend these hours and, ultimately, the night sittings. We believe an additional four days will help us keep more of our promises this fall.

The House leader also communicated about the ability for independents to contribute during ministerial statements. Right now, independents have the ability to contribute during every routine proceeding in the House like normal opposition members, except for responding to ministerial statements. To ensure fairness, in our judgment, we believe that providing independent members an opportunity to contribute during ministerial statements will help equalize that opportunity, and I know they will profit from that ability.

On applying Monday rules to opposition day debates that start earlier, another item that the House leader communicated to us earlier today—I just want to be clear, before any fearmongering commences—this change will not impact in any way the amount of debate during opposition days or the number of opposition days that will take place. That is important, for those who may have had a concern about this. We're communicating clearly, on the record, unequivocally, that that will not be the case. In fact, starting earlier has the potential to give members an additional two hours of debate for government legislation.

With respect to removing the 31-minute gap in between private members' business: This in no way changes how much debate is done during private members' business, nor would it change the amount of debate that would take

place if the Liberals ever regain party status—if they were paying attention.

Interjection.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I mean, it's good to have them here. It's a healthy contrast that the Liberals showed up today. We have great respect for them—just to save myself, Madam Speaker.

This fixes two standing orders that currently contradict each other. That has been communicated to us across party lines, and we need to amend that, and we're doing that.

On changing the bells during a time allocation motion: Currently, adjournment motions during time allocation debate remove the ability of other members to contribute to debate. The opposition can still ring the bells if they want, but this move would change it so that any division bell that occurs during a time allocation debate is 10 minutes. It provides some certainty to our members, across party lines. This makes proceedings more predictable for members and, I would submit, for the assembly's operations and their staff. It also keeps any one member from taking an excessive amount of debate time away from other members during a time allocation debate.

Madam Speaker, obviously we believe these changes are in the public interest. We do encourage the opposition and independent members to consider these reforms part of a broader package to strengthen democratic renewal in this Legislature, to expand the amount of time and scrutiny that members opposite can give to our legislation, to allow more meaningful debate on the issues that matter to them.

I would submit that the issues that matter to the people of this province—with great humility, I've done some modest travel, largely across southern Ontario, in my capacity working under Minister McNaughton in infrastructure. The people of this province want, ultimately, to save more of their money. They want an economy that is growing, that yields and grows in private sector jobs, that creates opportunities for the next generation. We believe that these changes to the standing orders, yes, may be technical to some, but they actually will enable us to deliver on our word to get more done and to deliver on the commitments we made to the people of this province who truly in their hearts want change.

We are delivering that change, positive change, for every single person in this province: change for the taxpayer who for far too long felt that crippling taxes and user fee increases and skyrocketing hydro have made it very difficult to make ends meet. I know that is the case in Oshawa, in Waterloo, in Durham region, in Vaughan, in every region of this province, because we accept the premise that people are working harder and taking home less. So we all have a duty in this Legislature to consider ways to help give people that hope, the opportunity that they long for, and to put more of their hard-earned money back in their pockets.

We also have made a commitment to ensure that this Legislature runs smoothly with continued debate, with additional debate, with night sittings. When I went to my constituents—I recall I was at a seniors' event in my riding about three or four days after the first week of our sitting,

which was an exciting time no doubt for all of us, for the new members of this place. I remember a variety of seniors in my riding communicating adulation or really just being quite pleased that they saw us get back into the Legislature in the summer. It was unprecedented, not normative, certainly not something that the former government would have done and, I would submit, certainly not something that the opposition was excited to do. But it was our members who came to this place with a resolve to get to work and to deliver on the word that we made for the people of this province.

We are here today with a sense of unity of spirit on this side of the Legislature because we want to make sure that every single Ontarian can achieve their full potential and that, ultimately, we unleash the full economic potential of this province.

I started with a quote from Sir Winston Churchill, who is someone who I like to believe we all can look up to in some respects; obviously a notable hero in his own right and a public servant. I want to conclude with one because I think it really does summarize the need for change in the province and summarize the need for dramatic change from the former government that ultimately moved the province in the wrong direction. So if I may quote the wisdom of Sir Winston Churchill, he said, "Socialism is the philosophy of failure, the creed of ignorance, and the gospel of envy." Its "inherent virtue is the equal sharing of miseries."

We reject the premise that the socialist agenda of the New Democratic Party, of those opposite, would ever take hold in this province. We want to make sure that free-market principles, that the ability of our government to put more money back in their pockets, to support economic freedom for every single person—to make sure that opportunity is not a dream but is an achievable objective.

I conclude today by thanking greatly each member for their decorum, and I will match it to reciprocate.

I will just say that I feel very strongly about the need for these reforms to the standing orders, and I urge all members to consider them today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It is not with great pleasure that I participate in this debate because what we're really doing here—and most people back home watching would not understand what this is all about, and I don't blame them. Nobody watches the Legislature and understands what standing orders are all about in any kind of depth even in this House, let alone people watching back home. But this is all about standing order changes.

I have to say a couple of things right from the top. One is the comments made by my esteemed colleague across the way about Winston Churchill's comments. Those were comments he made in the 1945 election. There was such a backlash to his comments that it led to the downfall of the Conservative government. The most popular Prime Minister of the day, having led his nation through a most unbearable, unbelievable situation that they were in, the Second World War, seen as the nation's saviour, seen as

the saviour of Europe, went into an election and used that type of language and Brits turned on him and the Labour Party was elected. It was elected for two terms.

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They've gone back and forth between Labour and the Conservatives ever since, but I just caution us on that type of thing, because Winston Churchill, who I'm a great fan of—as you are, I'm sure. I'm sure you've read many of his books. The latest one I just borrowed from the Speaker, which was actually an interesting read—

Mr. John Vanthof: Even I read it.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —which I gave to my good colleague the member from Timiskaming.

The thing about Winston Churchill that we need to think about and we need to maybe act more like—he said at one point, “I am a creature of the House.” Essentially, he was the House. He was in that place for, God, what, almost 60 years by the time he left. He entered politics, I believe, in 1905, if I remember correctly, and left in the 1960s. So he was there for a very long time, with a couple of short, little interruptions in between, as he says. But the one thing that he always believed in: He believed in the House.

For example, a lot of people may not recognize this, but during the Second World War, Winston Churchill would bring everything to the House to talk about what was going on in the war, to all members of the House. He didn't leave anything out. He gave the bad—and there was lots of bad news, if you were in the Allied part of the war for the first three or four years. We didn't have a lot of good news. We kept on falling further and further behind the Germans at the time. He had enough confidence in the House to summon the House, to have the House sit during the war. Yes, they had closed sessions, because some of the stuff they had to do in closed session; but every member of the assembly was aware of what was going on, good and bad.

The one thing that Winston Churchill understood is you should always trust the House. A Legislature should not be run, as we call it, from the corner office. It should not be the Prime Minister or the Premier who decides everything. Members have to have some independence, even on the government side. In fact, Mr. Churchill on a number of occasions, both as a Liberal and as a Conservative twice, voted against his own government's initiatives. He did that a number of times because he recognized that you do have an individual responsibility as a member to do what you think is right and what you're sent to do by your constituents.

It's up to every member to decide when and how they will do that. I've done it as a government member, where I've voted against my own government on some matters. I've voted against my own party in opposition on certain matters. I was the only member of the House, as a New Democrat, to vote against the Endangered Species Act, because I felt it was going to do exactly what it ended up doing. But those are decisions that we have to make, and I think if we use Winston Churchill, we should recognize that Winston Churchill would never stand for limiting the—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, of course he wants more debate. Listen, I agree with you. Winston Churchill would love to have more debate. That's not my point.

Winston Churchill would never support measures that diminish the rules of the House in such a way that individual members or parties cannot do what they need to do, within the confines of the rules, to hold the government to account, including their own government. I just put that out on the record.

I guess I want to go through this in somewhat of a logical way. First of all, let's understand this for what it is. The government is changing the standing orders. They're not doing it for the good of the House; they're doing it for the good of their own government. Standing order changes by government are never about what's good for the House; they're about what's good for the government. If the government wanted to get into standing order changes, they could have invited the opposition, the official opposition and others, to discuss these matters this summer, about what standing orders could be changed.

Am I going to disagree that some standing orders should be changed? Of course not. Standing orders are evolving; I understand that. Some of them you could tweak. I don't disagree. But when you start going down the path of yet again consolidating power into the government by giving it more tools to be able to limit debate in the House—you're going to say, “Oh, we're adding 40 hours.” That's just a cute little thing that you're saying there. The extra 40 hours that you're adding are the extra—currently in our standing orders, you have the right as a government to call the House to sit until midnight in the last eight sessional days. You're changing that to be 12 sessional days. All this means to say is that the government is going to have more time to pass its agenda. That's all that means. It doesn't necessarily mean, just strictly because of the goodness of their hearts, that they're going to give us more time to debate. Remember: The result is the government will be able to pass more of its agenda. They will be able to pass more of their legislation because the House would sit from 6 to midnight those additional three weeks. It's not a great gift you're giving to the House; it's a gift you're giving to yourself. It's like going to the Christmas tree, wrapping up your own present, putting it underneath, pulling it out and saying to the whole family, “Surprise!” All you're really doing is giving yourself a little gift. So let's say that for what it is.

Be cautious of any government who comes forward and says, “I'm doing these standing order changes because this is good for democracy and it will add more debate.” By themselves, governments never change standing orders for the good of the House; they always change it for the good of themselves. Let's be clear for what it is.

The other thing: At no time did the government ever approach the official opposition—and I've got to imagine it would be the same for the independent members of the House—about any standing order changes. This place works better—and I will agree with my colleague across the way: This House works better when we work together. There's no question about that.

I came to this House at a time when the standing orders were very different. There was no time allocation. In other words, if a government wanted a bill passed, it only relied on being able to call the question. The threshold to get the question called was much higher than it is today. You couldn't have called the question at six or seven hours when I first got here in 1990, along with the current Speaker, Mr. Arnott, and the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. You would have never been able to do that because the threshold would have been much higher than that because there was no time allocation. It was always different in every debate to what degree did the Speaker think there was something new being added to the debate and to what degree was there an argument being put forward that nobody had heard. The threshold was much higher and was a bit different every time.

The other thing is that a member could stand in this House, when I first got here, and there was no limit on how long a member could speak. There were no limits. You would come to this House, you got the floor and you spoke as long as you needed to speak. There was a reason behind that. This goes back to the parliamentary system out of Westminster. That is, it is a tool that members have—and I'm not just talking opposition. Winston Churchill used it to great effect when he was both in the Liberal government and the Conservative government and in opposition. He would take the floor and he would filibuster on a particular matter in order to make the point and to seize the moment, so that the House can start thinking about what it needed to do to address the concerns, because the government then is in a position where they've got to figure a way out. And guess what it is? It's by way of compromise.

I want to give you a couple of examples that I saw in my early times here in the House when there was no time allocation, when there was no limit on debates. Bells could ring. If members didn't come into the House and the bells rang, the House didn't sit. You had to have a quorum and you had to have opposition in the House to make that work. The point is that those rules were very seldom used. It wasn't often that members would filibuster in the House. I know that Mr. Bradley did once. I know that Mr. Kormos did it once. I also did it once in government for a particular reason.

But the point is that it's not something that members used frivolously, because we understood that we also have a responsibility as members both of government and opposition, that the basic idea of the Legislature is a fairly simple one: The government must propose. The government is the one who controls the agenda of the House. Only they can call a motion or a bill forward for debate. They're in complete control of what happens in this House—and that's rightfully so. If they won a majority or they're in a minority situation where they're the government, they have to have the ability to control the agenda of the House. Nobody disagrees. We're all on the same page.

But the other part is that we understand in the opposition, as you do in government, that the government must get its way at the end. The government is a government. It

has to be able to pass its legislation. Even when the rules were that there were no standing orders such as time allocation or limits on debates or other things, the government always got its way. Why? Because we all understood in this place that in order for this place to work, we needed to find ways together to get around particular issues.

Let me give you a couple of examples. When I was first elected in 1990, we ran and were told by the Liberals that there was a \$600-million surplus. We got elected, we opened books and we found that there was close to a \$9-billion deficit. The Liberals had done what has happened in this House before, where they reported one thing and, when we got there and opened the books mid-year—because it was September 6 when we were elected—there was close to a \$9-billion deficit in the books at that time, when the government had just run and said it had a \$600-million surplus.

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So we had some really tough decisions to make as a government. We decided we would add a billion dollars to that number with anti-recession measures. We added a billion to do two things: We added that for infrastructure, and we also added it for what we called an anti-recession fund, so that if you lost your job as an employee, you would not have to wait in line to get your severance. The government would pay your severance up front, and we would go after the employer to get your severance. That way at least, in this huge downturn of the early 1990s that we had going on in the economy, people wouldn't have to wait for their severance. We added about \$1.2 billion to the deficit by doing that, so the deficit ended up being about \$10.5 billion.

The then Conservative opposition, the third party—I believe 17 or 20 members at the time; I don't remember the exact number—were aghast with the deficit numbers. They were effective at blaming the NDP for the entire deficit. Now, I think we were inept as a government at being able to point out that there was \$8.5 billion or \$9 billion that was the Liberals, who had lied to Ontario about it—I may not be able to say that; I'll withdraw that before I get withdrawn, before I get admonished.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I was going to withdraw you, but—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yeah. The point is the numbers that were reported—we were not very good as a government at pointing out—

Interjection: It repeats itself.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, it repeats itself: We should have called in the auditors. We should have had the books audited and we should have had the auditors report what the real numbers were so that we didn't get pinned with that deficit. But we didn't. That was a political decision, and I think it was a mistake on part of Bob Rae. I think it says volumes of Bob Rae. Maybe he wanted to kill the NDP party. Maybe that's what it was all about. Who knows? But that's what happened. I was there, so I can say that.

But here's what happened: The Conservatives then, with Mike Harris as the leader, said, "I'm not happy with

this. I'm not happy with this budget. This budget has got a \$10.5-billion deficit. This is reckless. This is no good. I'm a fiscal conservative. I stand for balanced budgets." Fair enough. So guess what Mr. Harris did?

Mr. Stephen Lecce: Common Sense Revolution.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, that came four years later. This was the first year of the NDP government.

What Mr. Harris did is that he stood in this House and he named every lake and river that he could, just as I did this summer, in order to slow this government down—in this case, our government—from being able to call the business of the House. Back then, under routine proceedings, there was no limit to how long the introduction of bills could go, so he just kept on introducing bills. It wasn't limited to an hour and a half as we are now; it was as long as you wanted to go. They filibustered debate. They put people up in debate and filibustered because they wanted one thing: They wanted the NDP government to force the budget bill to be travelled during the session that we were in, which was the spring of, I guess, 1991.

The budget back then never travelled; it was always the pre-budget consultation that travelled. The only thing that went to committee was that the budget itself went to committee here at the House, but it never travelled at that time. But the demand on the part of Mr. Harris was that he wanted that budget bill to travel for two or three weeks. Because the Conservatives had the rules to be able to do it, they filibustered the House, and they introduced bills ad infinitum as a tool to get the NDP government to agree to allow the bill to travel. We had to. As a government, we had no choice. We had to negotiate with the then-opposition, even though we were a majority.

Every government up until that point had the same reality: Bill Davis did, Mr. Peterson did, Mr. Robarts did. Every Premier before was in a House where the basic model of Westminster was that the government proposes and the government, at the end, always gets its legislation, but that individual members and opposition parties have the right to hold the government to account, knowing that, at the end, you will always get your way. This is how this place used to work.

We had real House leaders' meetings where the House leaders would get together and the government would say, "Okay, this is what I propose we do in the upcoming session: X number of bills need to be passed at second reading because we want to get them into committee for the intersession, and X number of bills have to pass at third reading." The government would tell the opposition what it was that they wanted, and then we sat down and we negotiated. We said, "Okay, on these bills, guess what, we're not having any debate at third reading. All we want on that bill is two weeks of debate here in the House and two weeks of travel in the intersession or two weeks of committee here in the House." And that's what you did: You negotiated it.

What was wrong with allowing the bill to go to committee? If the government has got an initiative that they've introduced, you've got to suppose that they're proud of what they're introducing. So what's wrong with

sending the bill into committee? It only gives the public the chance to be able to comment on your bills, good and bad, and the government can utilize the committees in the same way as the opposition in order to put forward its points as to why they think this bill is good or bad or indifferent. There's nothing to be lost by a government allowing the House to have the authority to force the government to send bills into committee.

There was no time allocation. All we had to do to force a bill into committee was to stand, and I believe then it was by 12 members of the House. That's all we had to do. And it was not time-allocated in committee. When the bill went to committee, the committee was in charge of what happened. It wasn't the government.

My point is, even though the rules back then were much more pure when it came to the intent of the British model, the government always got its way. It never, never lost its ability to be able to pass legislation. Was legislation delayed for two or three weeks and sometimes months? Absolutely. But was that a bad thing?

When I came here in 1990, a bill was typically introduced in one session; let's say the fall session. It would normally get second reading in the fall session. In the intersession, we would have committee hearings, either here in Toronto or we'd travel the bill to those communities affected. Then the bill came back in the next session for third reading. When it came back for third reading, we had little or no debate because all of the debate had been had in the first session at second reading and the time in committee. Guess what happened? The bills actually got amended in such a way that the bills worked better.

I'll give you another example. We were the government that moved sustainable forest redevelopment, which we have as an act currently on the books, so that any tree that you cut in the forests of northern Ontario or anywhere in this province, there has to be a forest management plan that takes into account the effects on the forest, the effects on the fauna, on the wildlife, and on those people utilizing the forest. It looks at the ecosystem. Then we ensure that whatever we cut, we're able to replant or regrow. So it's a living forest. It works very well. Ontario is the gold standard when it comes to forest management.

When that bill went to committee, our government back then—and I believe it might have been Bud Wildman who was the minister of the day or it might have been Howard Hampton—thought they had thought it all through with the bureaucracy and with members. We drafted a bill. But guess what? We found out all kinds of things when we went to committee. Then the Conservatives—I think it was Mr. Hodgson who was the Conservative member on the committee—and the Liberals of the day made sure to bring all kinds of experts to the committee who were foresters to talk to us about the bill. We went to places like Hearst, Kapuskasing, Sioux Lookout, Ear Falls and those places that were affected by the bill. In fact, you went to Ear Falls with me, if I remember correctly. At that time, you were my executive assistant.

The point is, at the end of that process, the bill was strengthened because members brought forward ideas in

order to strengthen the bill. It worked so well that that law has been on the books since 1993. It's essentially the same thing. Why? Because we did a good job of it at the beginning.

So the government now comes forward and says, "Well, let's change the standing orders because that's going to give us more debate and that will be a better thing." But I've got to tell you, it's not about making bills better; it's not about strengthening the democratic process. All you're really doing is consolidating power onto yourself. This is much the same as what's happening with the "notwithstanding" clause that's being invoked in the old Bill 5, now Bill 31, the City of Toronto Act. This is more of the same. This is the government overreaching, the government saying, "Do you know what? I don't really have respect for due process of law. If I don't get what I want because the courts ruled against me, I'll just do what I want." When it comes to standing order changes, it's the same principle. It's consolidation of power.

That's a really dangerous thing because once you start to do that and you start to incrementally do it more and more, you start normalizing that it's quite okay for that type of action to happen. Before you know it, you no longer have the democratic rights that you think you should have and had at the time. You find yourself in the position of all of a sudden being without the protections that you thought you had, and the government becomes more and more dictatorial in nature than it should be. Again, as I just said at the beginning of this thing, this is not about the government trying to do a good thing. This is about the government consolidating power.

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As I was saying, why didn't the government come to us and the rest of the opposition members and the independents and say, "Listen, let's have a discussion about standing order changes"? Now, I would imagine the reason why is that the government is not interested in having such a discussion. They don't want to enact that kind of discussion because it might actually lead to standing order changes that might help the House on both sides. So instead, the government slipped us yesterday afternoon, at about 4 o'clock, a piece of paper that shows the motion of the standing order changes. I looked at it and I went, "Jeez, my, that was fast." I knew you guys eventually were going to do this kind of thing, but you did it pretty quick in the mandate—less than 20 days here. You've invoked the "notwithstanding" clause and now you're making standing order changes.

I will predict this is not the last of the standing order changes we're going to see. This government will change standing orders in this place, and there are not too many members of the assembly who are going to be happy. I just give you this one warning. For those of you who are lucky to be re-elected at the next election, many of you may not be in government again. Don't think that automatically, you have a free pass in the next election and you're going to be yet again a majority government, because you don't know what's going to happen. I don't know either.

If you get defeated in the next election, part of that defeat will be because you've done things like this. You're branding your government early on as a highly high-handed, father-knows-best kind of dictatorial government in using the "notwithstanding" clause and limiting the powers of the House. That brands you.

It's like my friends in the Liberal Party. They were very, very adept in the previous election. They ran on the NDP ground and they were very effective—I give them full credit—at trying to position themselves as being the only choice of progressives; consequently, they formed a majority government. All's fair in love and war, as they say, and in politics it's the same. I didn't like it, I was frustrated, but they did a very effective job at doing that.

But what killed the Liberals—why are the Liberals here now with seven members? Privatization of hydro was a big part of it. When they privatized hydro, it broke their brand. It went right against the brand. All of the progressives in Ontario who said "Kathleen Wynne's my champion" started going, "How can she be my champion if she's privatizing our hydro system?" Then they started to creep privatization into the health care system. I'm not going to go into all of the stuff that happened, but our health care system suffered as a result of two things: They didn't properly fund the health care system and they also increased privatization in health care. Again, the progressives sat back and said, "Hmm, this is not the kind of Liberal government that I voted for. This is not the Kathleen Wynne that I thought I knew," and as a result, they ended up losing their brand and they became seven members of the assembly.

I've suffered that; twice I've been over there, where I've not been a party. I know what it feels like and what happens when governments break their brand. We broke our brand with the social contract. When our government, the NDP government, decided to do a social contract, it broke the brand. We didn't do public auto insurance: It killed the brand. We got judged by that very early on by our own supporters, and as a result we branded ourselves with our own stupid decisions—I'll say it now: We should never have done both of those things; it was the wrong thing to do—and we broke our brand.

Well, you guys are breaking your brand now, really early on. It's not even 20 days of session and you guys are invoking the "notwithstanding" clause to deny the rights of citizens in the city of Toronto and saying, "I'll do it again." Who's next, rural Ontario? Is it northern Ontario? Is it some environmental cause that gets brought to the courts—for example, the challenge on cap-and-trade? You lose the cap-and-trade argument and you use the "notwithstanding" clause in order to deny what the courts have done? That's a real breaking of the brand, and you guys could well be in a position where you don't come back here as a government. A number of you wouldn't come back at all, and those who are lucky enough to come back, you're going to have to live with the standing order changes you made. You're going to have live with the "notwithstanding" practices that you use, because once you start to use that, it becomes normalized, and other governments will use it in a way that you won't like.

That's why governments have never touched that poisoned vine or whatever you want to call it, the "notwithstanding" clause. That's why Brian Mulroney spent his entire time at Meech Lake trying to convince Canadians to get rid of the "notwithstanding" clause, because he recognized that it was a problem. He saw it from a right-wing perspective: "What do I do if judges make decisions that I as a right-winger don't like, and they maintain decisions that are progressive that I don't like?" He was worried about it for the opposite reasons you are. So he spent a whole bunch of political capital as the Prime Minister of this country trying to get rid of the "notwithstanding" clause out of the Constitution. I'm just saying, you guys are setting yourselves up for a heck of a rebranding as a party. I think at this point I'm not even going to refer to you guys as Progressive Conservatives anymore. You are a radical social conservative party. That's how I will refer to you from now on.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You are. You are. You're all voting for the "notwithstanding" clause.

You're all wonderful people; don't get me wrong. Every individual here is an honourable member, and I don't have problems with people individually here. I've made great friendships with many members on the other side, as you well know, and you've made good friendships on this side, as well. But I'll tell you, this is not the Progressive Conservative Party of the past. This is not Bill Davis's party. This is not even Mike Harris's party. This is not Brian Mulroney's party. This is not John Robarts's party. This is a radical social conservative party who believes that if it doesn't get its way, it will do whatever it has to get there.

It's a bit of a thug-type attitude. It's a little bit like a street gang, an "if you don't get what you want, you take out the brass knuckles" kind of thing. I'd just say to you across the way that this is a really slippery slope that you're going down. As you come forward and you bring rule changes to the House, remember that those rule changes are viewed in the same way as what you're doing on the notwithstanding clause. It's about a consolidation of power.

It's about saying, "You know what? The NDP beat us"—you know, this is the real irony of this whole thing. In the previous debate on Bill 5, yes, our party used the rules in order to slow the government down, in order to try to be able to give pause to the government on Bill 5, because we all know that you might like Bill 5, but there's a whole bunch of citizens in Toronto who don't like it. A whole bunch of citizens are very uncomfortable with seeing their council change and all that it entails. So yes, we used the rules to hold you up, and as a result of the NDP holding the government to account on Bill 5—in that particular instance for one day, and with other measures for a couple days; we probably held you up about a week—"Oh, we've got to change the standing orders. Look what happened. We got elected and the first thing the NDP did—my God—they opposed us." Well, yeah. You guys were doing something that we and most people don't agree with.

I'll tell you now, as House leader of the NDP, that I don't need to do reasoned amendments on a whole bunch of legislation, and I won't, if it's legislation that's reasonable. If you bring forward changes to the Municipal Act that do reasonable things, heck, we're not going to give you reasoned amendments. In the previous Parliament, we didn't use reasoned amendments very often. In fact, you're the guys who used reasoned amendments over and over and over again in the last year, especially in the Brown era. When Mr. Brown took over as party leader, you guys used reasoned amendments quite often, almost on every piece of legislation. When the government says, "Oh, we hardly ever used it at all," you may not have used it at the beginning of the 15 years of the Liberal reign, but you certainly used it in the last year. You high-throttled it. We couldn't run to the table fast enough with a reasoned amendment, because your House leader, Jim Wilson, was sitting on the Clerk's lap, giving him more and more reasoned amendments. It was just the way that you guys did things. Mr. Walker, the whip, would know. He was there. That's the way it went.

But to argue that the rationale to change the rules of the House is because the opposition held you up for a couple of days on Bill 5 and opposed you on the cancellation of those contracts in regard to windmills and what you did on the cancellation of the energy program that allowed people to retrofit their homes, that this is a terrible thing and that we've got to change the standing orders in order to uphold our right to be able to pass the legislation—I want to ring the bell. You guys did pass your legislation. We might have held you up for a couple of days. All we did was give you pause to think about it and give the public a chance to organize.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It was only a couple of days.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, I thought somebody was arguing opposite. Sorry. I take that back.

But my point is that we held you up for a couple of days. Whoopee. The House never used to pass legislation in six and a half hours when I first got here. Most bills were in the House for at least 15 hours by the time they got ordered into committee, because you would try to quickly get to an accommodation on committee hearings in order to get the bill into committee. We spent most of our time in committee. In fact, this House used to sit in Committee of the Whole, something that nobody has seen around here. Nobody even knows what that is—you do, because you're the Deputy Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Third.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, you're the third Deputy Speaker. You've been briefed.

But when we used to have Committee of the Whole House, the House would resolve into committee and we would deal with things in this House by way of a large committee of the House. Why? Because we didn't waste our time too much at second reading, and we certainly wasted hardly any time at third reading, because we would

come to accommodations about how a bill was to be dealt with. So the government would come with a controversial bill, like the NDP did with its first budget bill, and we came to an accommodation and you got committee hearings. Other times when other bills came before us, under ourselves and under even Mike Harris at the beginning, they were referred to Committee of the Whole. They weren't dealt with in the House. The House didn't deal with things at any length of time because we didn't need to go there; the government knew that we could slow them down if we had to, so they learned to work with the opposition.

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And guess what? Bob Rae never lost a bill that he was able to introduce. Michael Harris never lost a bill that he introduced in the House that he didn't want to lose. Neither did Dalton McGuinty or anybody else, and neither will you. You're the government. You have the right to introduce legislation, and you will get all of your bills passed. Nobody is here denying you that right, because it is your right.

Does anybody here think that we should be able to hold up the government forever on a bill? No. I think, though, that we need leverage to be able to say, "Hey, this bill should go to committee and the public should be able to come to speak to the bill." For example, the city of Toronto bill, Bill 5: That bill should have gone to committee. It should have had at least four or five days of hearings here in Toronto for people to come and speak. If you were thinking it was such a great idea, get your people out to say how great it is and give yourself the backdrop to be able to say, "This is why we're doing it." By not going to committee, you're showing your brand. You are showing your brand that you are intolerant of any opposition, you're intolerant of any opinion that's different from yours, and you're acting in a way that is dictatorial. I think you are quickly branding yourself as a radical social conservative party, and not the Conservative Party of Ontario and the Conservative Party of Canada we once knew.

Now, I don't know. Did you serve with Brian Mulroney?

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I served with Stephen Harper.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You served with Stephen Harper, yes, so you would know. I may not have agreed with Brian Mulroney and I may not have agreed with Stephen Harper, but they were Prime Ministers of the country and they had the right to introduce legislation. They respected the due process of law. They understood the due process of law and that you have to have the checks and balances in the system.

So let's talk a little bit about what you guys are doing and then talk about it in a way that—it won't be exactly flattering. The first one I'll deal with is the first amendment where you say in your standing order changes that we're going to now have 12 days to be able to sit until midnight at the end of the session, rather than eight.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, it's 12 days. It used to be eight, but you're moving to 12. So let's agree. Let's agree.

The government argues, "Oh, this is great, because this gives the opposition more time to debate." True. It gives us more time to debate. I'm not going to deny that. But it also gives the government a heck of a lot more time to pass its bills.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, you should be able to pass your bills. But my point is that all this does is serve your purpose. You have more time to be able to pass your bills. I'm sure there was a discussion this summer in the House leader's office about bringing back late-night sittings. When I was here, at one point, especially under the Conservatives, this House sat until midnight almost every night, Monday through Thursday. At the time, we were seven members over there. We had to staff the House from 1 o'clock in the afternoon to midnight every day. Mon Dieu, France, c'était d'ur. You will understand, as whip.

It was a very difficult thing, but along came—and I give Lisa MacLeod some credit. She came to this Legislature and said, "Listen, I'm a young mother. We can't have this House sit until midnight all the time." She proposed a family-friendly agenda with the House not sitting until midnight, and Dalton McGuinty in the day said, "Yes, that kind of makes sense." So we switched. We sit in the morning now, rather than sitting at night. The government got a little bit of extra time by having three mornings that it can sit, and we didn't have to sit midnights.

I bet you had a discussion about bringing back late-night sittings. I think you may have had some reasoned people in the House leader's office—at least I would hope—who lived through those midnight sessions and said they were the worst debates we had ever seen. I'll let you draw your own conclusions. They were not good debates, trust me. We'll just leave it at that. It was not a productive way for this House to function for all kinds of reasons. So now we have debates in the morning and we have debates in the afternoon. That seems to have been a good compromise, and it worked.

I think where you guys were going and where you might still go is to bring back late-night sittings. I just warn you all—I love this place. I can be in here every day. I love the Legislature. I wish I could be as smart as Winston Churchill, but I'll agree with him on one thing: I am a creature of this House. I really love this place. I think this is an amazing place, and all of us who are honoured to be elected and to serve here know how lucky we are. It is an amazing, amazing place. But I don't want this place sitting till midnight. I work every night, as all of you do, till 8, 9, 10 o'clock, at meetings, constituency events or whatever it might be. We all work once this House is not sitting. This is only part of what we do in a day.

Most people don't know that my good friend from—

Mr. Stephen Lecce: King-Vaughan.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —King-Vaughan probably started at about 7 or 7:30 in the morning and you probably don't finish till about 9, 10 o'clock at night, every day, seven days a week. That's the life of an MPP.

Are we complaining? Absolutely not. Every four years, I go out and defend the right to do that. My point is, we do it because we love it.

I'm a creature of this House, but I do not believe that our time should be spent in night sittings. Night sittings are not a good idea. By adding an additional four days to night sittings, you're not doing any favours to the House and to members. You will find that when you do that, it's not the most productive way of using your time, as far as debate. In the end, you will rue the day you did it, because you're going to hate being here till midnight for all kinds of reasons. You will see when it happens; I'll just leave it at that.

The government is also allowing in these rule changes a change—and most people are going to say, “Well, that doesn't mean much. It's not a big deal. Who really cares?”—that from now on, on opposition days, rather than the opposition day being in a situation where—when the opposition day happens on Tuesday or Wednesday, it essentially kills a legislative day for the government. There's one afternoon, either Tuesday or Wednesday, when we, the opposition, use our five opposition days per session—there are five days, legislatively, on a Tuesday or Wednesday, if called, that the government doesn't get to do its agenda. In the standing orders, there is a placeholder for five days for the opposition to be able to hold the government to account and to kill, essentially, a legislative afternoon. The government has come now with a change to the standing orders that they propose where, whenever an opposition day happens on a Tuesday or on a Wednesday, they reserve the right for the House to come in at 1 rather than 3 o'clock. Most people out there would say, “Well, that looks reasonable. What's wrong with that?” What's wrong with that is that it takes away the ability of the opposition to hold the government to account. Yes, we'll still get our opposition day, but you also get another day of debate on your bill.

There may be a reason why we, the opposition—as you know. You were in opposition, my good friend from Caledon—

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Dufferin–Caledon. Ten long years.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —Dufferin–Caledon. Ten long years in opposition. Yes, you know well that you use opposition days when you want to slow the government down. You may be unhappy, as you were as Conservatives—well, there are two parts of it. One is to propose ideas, and we all do that; I get that. But you were opposed to certain initiatives of the government. Some you agreed with; some you didn't. When you were in a pickle where you didn't like what they were doing, you used an opposition day as a tactic to slow the government down for another day. You would look at the legislative calendar for the week, or at least your House leader would have done that, and say, “If we do an opposition day this week, that means the government can't get their bill until that day, and we can use that time to do whatever.” So you used it to your strategic advantage.

What you've now done is very clever, because it looks very innocuous when you look at the standing order change on its own. “What's the difference? We still have five opposition days. We still get two hours of debate per opposition day. We will still have the debate. We'll still

propose what we're going to propose. And we'll have votes on those five opposition days. What did the opposition lose?” The government will argue, “Nothing.” Well, yes, we lose something. We lose the ability to hold you up for one day. For example, in a regular session, I could file an opposition day that would slow down passage of Bill 5 or would have slowed down passage of Bill 31 by a day.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, you're here to debate, but the members should know—10 years of opposition—my friend, you understand well. Don't pretend you don't, because you're a very, very clever member. I have great respect for you.

The opposition at times wants to slow a government down for good reason, and that's not necessarily a bad thing.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Just a reminder, as congenial as the debate is at this moment, that the debate is to be routed through the Chair and that we refer to members by their titles or their ridings.

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Mr. Gilles Bisson: Madam Speaker, if I can ever remember, first of all, people's names let alone their ridings, I'd be so blessed.

I say through you, Madam Chair, to the honourable member across the way that, yes, the opposition uses those opposition days in order to delay the government by a day—wow, a day. Imagine, Rome will fall if Julius Caesar didn't have another—well, maybe it wouldn't have fallen if he had another day. Maybe that's a bad analogy. You're not going to lose anything as a government by having an opposition day where the only subject matter in that afternoon is an opposition motion. You lose a day; the bill happens a day later. It isn't the end of the world. You're still going to get your bill.

We in the opposition need the ability sometimes to slow you down, as with what's going on right now with Bill 31. We're in the middle of a municipal election and the government has thrown a monkey wrench into this election to which the clerk of the city of Toronto is saying, “I don't think I can carry out this election.” My God—that's what the Clerk said. Am I wrong? I look to the member from Toronto–Danforth. Did I read that right? The clerk of Toronto came out today and said, “I don't think I can pull off this election given what the government is doing.”

We're trying to give you pause to say, “Listen, if you want to change the size of the council of the city of Toronto, that's your right.” I don't argue for a second you don't have the right to do that. Should you do it is the other question. I argue, as a social democrat, as a New Democrat, that that should rightly be the decision of the municipality. If the municipality wants to change the size of council, let them do it.

We have the government across the way with Premier Ford saying, “Oh, yeah, but nothing happens there. That place is a crazy house.” There were eight years of Fords over there. You see what's going on over here with the

Premier today. It's the same type of thing that the Fords did at municipal council.

Rob Ford and Mr. Doug Ford, when they were councillors of the city of Toronto—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: They were councillors. I'm allowed to say that.

Mr. and Mr. Ford, the two brothers, when they were at council, along with Giorgio Mammoliti and a few others—they're the reason that the council was crippled with a whole bunch of decisions. Why did we not get the subways built that the government complains about? It was his own brother, the mayor of Toronto, and it was Mr. Ford himself who were opposing building subways in the city of Toronto, because they wanted to have another plan that didn't agree. Mr. Miller, who was then the mayor of the city of Toronto, put together a plan that everybody agreed with on the council, except for the Fords and the Mammolitis of this world, in order to get Toronto moving again. The first thing that Mr. Ford did when he got elected as mayor was undo all of that.

I was a member of the government that was building a cross-Eglinton subway in the city. We had put the money forward to extend the subway off the Avenue Road line, up at Avenue Road and Eglinton, and it was going all the way west—I think we were going to Finch, right?

Ms. Marit Stiles: I think so.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I think we were going all the way to Finch. My God. Conservatives got elected and guess what they did? They called the cement trucks and they cemented in our subway. They cemented all of the work that we did.

These guys get up and talk about—the current government says it wants to get Toronto moving, and this is all about building subways. They put cement into subway holes. They blocked the tunnels with cement.

As mayor of Toronto, Rob Ford, Councillor Doug Ford, Mr. Mammoliti and all the other radical conservatives at council did everything they could in order to kill the transit plan that had been agreed to by the council under Mayor Miller.

So these guys aren't about building subways. It's about doing what they think is right, and only the radical social conservatives know what's right.

We already heard from members across the way saying, "Well, they're radical socialists, so they know nothing." I heard a quote about Winston Churchill making derogatory comments about the left.

My God. Thank God we have the left in this country, and thank God we have the left in Europe, because we're only the parties that brought things like public medicine, that brought things like public education, that brought things forward like good public housing—

Interjection: Brought you the weekend.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —lengthened the weekend, and all those things. We're the ones who did that. I'm proud to call myself a social democrat, because we stood for those things and still do.

But these radical social conservatives at city hall and here in Toronto at Queen's Park are about what's good for them. If there's anything in the law that stands in their way, they'll use the "notwithstanding" clause to get around it. If there's anything in this Legislature, when it comes to rules, that may inhibit their right to hold legislation by a day, they will use their power to eliminate that.

That's like they say. That's like going—what is it? Going into a gunfight? I never get a good one. I'm so bad with using—what do you call those things?

Mr. John Vanthof: Metaphors.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Metaphors.

Ms. Marit Stiles: You're making your point.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm making my point: I'm terrible with metaphors.

But it's like hitting a fly with a tank rather than a flyswatter. It's just overreaction completely.

The government says, "Oh, well, we're going have opposition days on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. We'll have a 1 o'clock sitting." Well, my God, this is not about there being more debate. This is about the government accelerating its agenda. Let's call that for what it is. It is as simple as that.

The question of should we adjourn the House on Thursdays during private members' business for the amount of the time that we have to, because of the debate times, because there are only two parties—you know, I don't disagree with that. That's something that we certainly could have talked about. But again, there was no time where the government House leader reached out to me as the official opposition House leader of our team to say, "We're proposing rule changes." We might have opposed what you're trying to do, but at least you could have heard us out.

You can't have a relationship, or build a sustainable relationship, if you don't have open communication. How can this government operate if it is not talking to the official opposition and talking to the other parties about what it is that it wants to do? Because you might be surprised. There are going to be bills that you're going to bring forward in this House that we're going to agree with and that we're going to support. We would say to you, "Tell you what. You can have that one quicker, but the other one is going to be a bit slower, because we want public hearings." Is that a bad thing? Absolutely not. That's what should be happening around this place.

I think that the government has got to be pretty darned clear—and I hope the public is going to be pretty darned clear; I'm hopeful that that may be the case—that this is really about consolidation of power. This is nothing more, nothing less.

For the government to try to spin this, that it's somehow a great gift to the opposition and all members of the House to have more time for debate by lengthening the sitting by one week of midnight sittings at the end of the session, by saying, "You know what? We're now going to have longer debates on opposition days, so that the government can pass more legislation"—it is not a gift to the opposition. It

is not a gift to members of the House. This is a gift to Doug Ford, made by Doug Ford—excuse me; the Premier—wrapped up by the Premier and put under his own tree. This is all about what this thing is.

Again, I say, with the government across the way, this won't be the only time that we're going to see these types of changes.

The other thing is that the government, under the standing order changes that are proposed, says, "Well, you know what? You guys were so effective in the NDP, last time, utilizing adjournment of the House and adjournment of the debate during a debate on a time allocation motion, and were so successful in killing a day, that we're going to take that away from you."

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, that's not going to happen again.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Not going to happen again—we will no longer be able to adjourn the House during a time allocation debate.

The government says, "Well, that's only reasonable." Is it? Really? The House may want to adjourn for some reason, and you'll take that right away. You're going to say, "Oh, yes, but you can use unanimous consent." Maybe not. I look over to my friends, the eight independents. They may not want to give unanimous consent to do something that's natural.

Mr. John Vanthof: Especially the dude in the corner.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, that dude in the corner. We're not going to say who that dude is, but he may very well say no.

My point is, who are you really helping here? Again, you're taking a tank to kill a fly. Rather than going in and hitting the fly with a flyswatter, you're taking a tank and you're dropping a Sherman on top of the fly.

Mr. John Vanthof: Do you know the trouble with a tank?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What?

Mr. John Vanthof: It backs over you.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Exactly—a very good point. My friend from Timiskaming–Cochrane points out that once the tank falls on you, it does back up and run you over a second time.

But the point is, it's really a silly way to get at what is your problem. Your problem, from your side, is that you want to be able to pass legislation. I want to ring the bell and let you know that you're the government. You will always pass your legislation. The opposition can't, shan't, shall not and should not have the ability to stop a government from passing a bill. You are the government. We recognize that. Am I happy with the results of the last election? Absolutely not. I think we should have been on that side of the House. But that's fair. The people of Ontario decided and we need to respect the people of Ontario who put you there as a government, so I'll work with that. I'm fine. I believe in democracy and the people have decided, so that's what I have to live with.

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But so what if your bill gets delayed by a day? What is that going to do to you in the end, other than have to take

pause for a day? You know, there's an old thing. You get frustrated with a situation at home. You're trying to build something and you've got your thumb there and you've got your finger here trying to hold it together. You're frustrated, and the more frustrated you become the worse the outcome of the job is. Sometimes you've just got to walk away, say "Hang on, I'm going to go have a coffee and chill here, and I'm going to come back and do this all over again." And guess what? You get it done. A pause is a good thing at times. It allows you to recoup, to rethink and to maybe do the right thing.

Interjection: Sober second thought.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Sober second thought, as they say. Thank God we don't have a Senate here. That's the one thing that I'm happy we don't have in Ontario. There would be too much of that.

But my point is that a sober second thought is not a bad idea. The point that I'm making here is the government, in the proposed standing order changes that you're bringing forward, are not fixing anything. You're not giving the opposition anything. You're consolidating power and you're overreacting to what it was: a one-day filibuster. It wasn't even a filibuster. One day of ringing the bells and a couple of days of using reasoned amendments.

Again, I'll say to you now, to the government: I don't plan as the official opposition House leader to use reasoned amendments on all of your bills. Why would I? This is not our intent. There are bills that we're going to have agreement on. Eventually I hope you're going to have bills that are progressive. I hope that sometimes you're going to have bills that make some sense that we can work with and say to you, "Okay, we'll support this at second reading. Let's get it to committee, do what we have to do and we'll decide at third." Just like the government did. When you guys were the Conservatives in opposition, you voted in favour of the minimum wage legislation at second reading. That was your right, but we were surprised on this side of the House. My God, when they got up and voted with the government on minimum wage, we almost fell over as New Democrats. We couldn't believe it. We thought, "My God, Patrick Brown is trying to do something very different here." I guess there were a whole bunch of Tories who didn't like where that was going.

Mr. John Vanthof: There's no more Patrick Brown.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And there's no more Patrick Brown, and now we're back to the real social conservatives, the radical conservatives.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He got out of here with a tank. He needed a tank to get out of this place. That was funny.

But Madam Speaker, the government of the day voted in favour of the minimum wage legislation in order to allow the bill to go to committee. And the government of the day—I give them credit—did send that bill to committee. What, I think it was about two or three weeks that that bill travelled?

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Unfortunately. But I think it was two or three weeks of committee hearings, and the

government decided what it decided and the opposition, both us and the Conservatives, decided what we decided, and the Tories took the position they had to take in the end. That's fine.

I just want to say to the government, the best way to get your agenda forward is to work with the opposition, because you're going to find that there are a whole bunch of times when we're going to say, "Yes, we'll let you have that. You can have that quick. We're not even going to have a six-hour debate."

When you start using time allocation, you start forcing us to use all of the tools that we have to slow you down because there are no other tools that we have. But if you're prepared to work with the opposition and say, "Listen, I've got some bills over here that you probably can agree on"—because there will be some—guess what? You'll get some agreement on this side of the House.

If you came forward and said, "Listen, we want to move a bill that's actually going to create some good social housing in this province," do you think New Democrats would oppose that? We'd say, "Listen, we may not like the original idea that you have in the bill and we think it should be strengthened," but we'd allow the bill to get to committee, absolutely. If you came forward and said, "Do you know what? We need a bill in order to improve transit in the city of Toronto" or "We need a bill in order to improve intercity travel in northern Ontario," do you think we would oppose something like that? Absolutely not. We would allow you to bring that into the House, and we probably wouldn't have a great big debate on it, provided you said, "Let's have some time in committee." Because those of you who have served on committees that travelled—and there aren't many people left in this House who actually sat on committees that travelled as a routine. You learn a lot of stuff by listening to the public and getting ideas from what people have to say.

I remember one particular bill when the Conservatives were in power. It was a really simple bill. Mike Harris wanted to establish a regime that allowed snowmobile clubs to collect fees so that they could maintain their trails—great bill, great idea. So we all agreed.

There was a suggestion that the bill should not go to committee, that we should just pass it because all the parties agreed. Conservatives, New Democrats, Liberals, we were all onside. So at one point, somebody said, "We'll propose that we send the bill right to third reading," and we, New Democrats, said, "No, no, no. Let's send it to committee, because you never know what you're going to find out when you get to committee." So we travelled the bill on committee. We went up north and a few other places for a couple of weeks. Guess what? There were minefields inside that bill that none of us recognized when it came to property rights. You know, the Conservatives are very, very—

Mr. John Vanthof: Is that the one where I closed the trails in Timiskaming?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's the one where you closed the trails in Timiskaming, exactly, my good then-Conservative friend. It's all right; he drank the Kool-Aid.

He's with us now. He told me yesterday, watching you guys operate on the "notwithstanding" clause, that he now knows he made the right decision to become a New Democrat. He did tell me that.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm not coming back.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Never too late to do the right thing.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He's not coming back. One down in the family, two to go.

My point was that we actually heard from the public some really important points on property rights and a few other issues that nobody ever thought of, and guess what? The government amended the legislation. They agreed to our amendments. Guess what? The bill passed, it's still in place today, and it is the backbone that allows the Ontario trail system to be as good as it is. But we allowed the public to get in.

That's what you guys are missing here. You have to understand: Yes, you are the government. The people gave you a mandate to govern, and you need to propose legislation and your legislation must pass. But you have to involve the public, especially on those bills that you know are controversial. You're proposing them, so obviously you're glad that you are doing it and you think it's a good bill. Go defend it. Go to committee and allow yourself to hear what the public has to say and defend those bills across Ontario in committee hearings in the way that you should.

But changing the standing orders in the way that you're now proposing, those changes are going to do nothing when it comes to allowing this House to operate. This House will not have more committee hearings as a result of these standing orders; it will have less. This bill will do nothing to change the tenor of this House or the tone of this House. If anything, it's going to make it worse, because every time you restrict the power of the opposition, you leave us in a position of having to use whatever rules there are more extremely. We have to use them because it's the only thing you've got.

But I tell you, when I got here in 1990 and an individual member could filibuster the House—as some members did, Mike Harris included—that could be used to great effect in order to get what was right. At the end of the day, the government got a better product when it came to a bill. You should never be afraid of the House.

Winston Churchill, and I'll just end on this: His big thing was he always ultimately trusted that the House would do the right thing. He always believed that if you listened to members and you allowed members—not the corner offices, not the Premier's office—to make decisions and you allowed members to do their jobs, and that means government members as well sometimes being somewhat independent, the House would always make the right decision. If you look at the life of Winston Churchill, he was at the centre of a lot of controversial discussions that were going on at his time in Parliament, from 1905 to—1966, I think, is when he last sat in the House. He was in the middle of a lot of it, but he always understood: Trust the House. Members will always do the right thing if you respect the member.

This does not respect members. This is all about the Premier of this province saying, "I know best. I'm daddy, and you're going to do what I tell you to do because only I know what's best for Ontarians." I think we should trust every member of this assembly, government and opposition members alike, that we are all elected here for the same reasons; we are all honourable people. If given the opportunity and if we had the proper rules in this House, you would be surprised how much better you would feel as a government, because I would predict that you would not be using the "notwithstanding" clause if the rules were different than they are today, because a number

of you would have the ability to say, "That ain't happening, Premier. That ain't happening." And we would have the ability, as an opposition, to hold you up in order to be able to get the kind of changes that the people of this province want.

With that, Speaker, thank you for this time today.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):

Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. on Wednesday, September 19, 2018.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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