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Mercredi
19 septembre 2018

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Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 19 September 2018

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 19 septembre 2018

The House met at 0900.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Todd Smith: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 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, when Bill 31 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill, without further debate or amendment, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called that same day; and

That, when the order for third reading of the bill is called, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

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

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

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Smith, Bay of Quinte, has moved government notice of motion number 6. I look to the minister, the government House leader, to lead off the debate.

Hon. Todd Smith: I won't be spending a lot of time on this motion that we put forward here today. We, as the government, believe it's very, very important to provide that certainty, not just to the clerk of Toronto city hall, who will be administering the upcoming municipal election on October 22, so that the clerk's office can be prepared and begin the process of printing ballots for the upcoming Toronto election, but we can also provide the certainty necessary for those candidates who are interested in taking part in the election that will be occurring on that day, Mr. Speaker.

We've spent a lot of time in this Legislature—as a matter of fact, during the special sitting of the government over the summer months, we spent countless hours in this chamber—debating the previous incarnation of a bill like

this, Bill 5. That bill passed as the summer session ended; then we rose for our summer break.

Consequently, we find ourselves back here in the Legislature now with another unprecedented sitting, including a midnight sitting earlier this week, where members of the Legislature participated in a very informative debate. I thought it was one of the best debates that we've had in this Legislature in my time here.

We had a very, very solid discussion from members of the government backing up why our government feels so strongly about reducing the size of Toronto city council—smaller, better government in Toronto that will be able to act more quickly and work with cousins in the provincial Legislature here, and also our friends on Parliament Hill in the federal government, to ensure that we're doing the things that need to get done to make the largest economic hub not just in Ontario but in the country work better: building transit, building affordable housing, ensuring that goods can get across the city of Toronto.

I know that people in York region—Richmond Hill, Markham and up into northern York region—particularly on the east side, but throughout the GTA, are pulling their hair out every day in the gridlock that exists on the roads in and around the city of Toronto. With a more nimble council, I believe that we'll be able to get that transit built.

I see the Minister of Transportation here. He has big plans, along with the Premier of Ontario, to fix the transit situation, to make it work better for the residents of this city, but also to make sure, as I mentioned earlier, that we can get goods through the GTA. It's very, very important, because we're losing so much economic activity in gridlock. The Toronto Region Board of Trade, every year, puts out a report on how much the economy is losing because of the gridlock in the GTA.

As a matter of fact, last night I had some friends here in the Legislature. My brother-in-law, from Nashville, Tennessee, was here last night with his leadership team. A number of Americans were here taking a tour after hours of the Legislature, looking at our chamber. We were talking about different things that are happening in the United States, and we got talking about different things that are happening here.

The one thing that they said to me—and they've only been in Toronto for a couple of days—is: "We can't believe the traffic in this city." And these are people that travel—not just from Nashville, but they spend time in all of the American cities and cities around the world. It's a leadership team that works for a big call centre company that has locations all around the world, and they said that the one thing that they noticed in Toronto was the fact that

it takes forever to get anywhere. That's an impression that—these are outside residents of our country. They actually live in the United States of America. Their first impression was: "How can you ever get anything done in this city, because nobody can get anywhere?"

One of the big reasons why we're motivated to get this bill passed as quickly as we can is to end the gridlock at the Toronto city hall, but also to end the gridlock around the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, where we're losing so much money each year in economic activity. When you have those business people coming into the city and they're seeing that gridlock, it does alarm them, because they do have to get their goods to their destination. I know it's costing a lot of these companies a lot of money.

As I say, I don't intend to spend a lot of time on this bill here today. Our motivation today is to get this time allocation bill passed so that, if necessary, we will have the opportunity to pass Bill 31 later today. Of course, we're all awaiting a judgment that's coming later this morning. We'll be keeping a close eye on that, to see if it's necessary for us to even call Bill 31 to second and third reading votes.

As the government of Ontario, we thought it was very important to make sure that we get this bill passed, to provide that certainty, again, to the clerk of Toronto city hall and to the candidates who want to participate in the upcoming municipal election on October 22.

I know we're going to have a couple of hours' debate on the time allocation motion here this morning. Some members from the official opposition will no doubt be participating. We'll hear all kinds of great quotes about what members of the government had to say when they were the official opposition on time allocation. But because of the incredible time frame that we find ourselves in with the upcoming election on October 22, and the timelines that we're working with, we feel it's imperative that we get this bill passed as quickly as we possibly can.

I thank you for the time this morning, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to the debate.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've got to say, I'm really not happy to be part of this debate. I don't think anybody—on our side of the House, anyway—is particularly pleased with what's going on.

Let's try to put this in some context, here. The government says that we have a crisis and we need to deal with it, so they brought the House back. We started sitting at midnight; we did an all-nighter; we sat on the weekend; they brought in the "notwithstanding" clause. They created the crisis. So the government's trying to find a solution to a crisis that they created.

I just found that explanation from the government House leader somewhat interesting, because you created the crisis. It's like you start the fire, and you say, "Okay, go get me the fire department." That's essentially what you guys have done. So don't try to make yourselves out to be these great defenders of democracy who are trying to make sure the people of Toronto are able to get their voting

done in an orderly way, in a way that's constitutional, within a certain time frame, because you're the guys who created this.

0910

The city of Toronto spent three years—Mr. Ford was on that council as well, the now Premier, then Alderman Ford—in order to figure out what the size of that council should be. They came back and they said, "Not 45; rather, 47," for the reasons that they came to. Now, all of a sudden, because the current Premier has a grudge match with the city and with council and God knows what else—maybe he has discussions with developers that may prove to be interesting after this has all passed; I don't know. But they're the ones who actually created it—

Interjection.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: Point of order: It's very early in the debate this morning and already the opposition, in their first speech in the House, is referring to motive again. It's not allowed under standing order 23(i).

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I will advise the House, regardless of what may have gone on in the past, to be very careful in imputing motive and using language that could be construed as definite imputing of motive. So be very careful. There's a very fine line there. I would ask that all members on all sides be very cautious. Thank you.

Please continue.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, thank you for that, but I wasn't imputing motive; I was saying, "Here are some of the possibilities." That's all I'm saying here. Government gets up quite often, including the Premier of the province, to talk about how they feel about us, how they feel about our leader, how they feel about some of our policies, and, quite frankly, what some of our motives are. It's always done by the government across the way. I just say that those who dish it out should be able to take it. It should be as simple as that.

I just want to say, this is a crisis created by the government. This is not a crisis that was created by anybody else other than the Ford government. So for you to come to this House and try to tell the public, "We have your interests in hand so we need to get this done really quickly," I think is passing strange.

The second thing is, you know, Legislatures aren't just about MPPs; it's about the people. We make laws for the people of Ontario, and our rules, as with every Legislature in this land and any other parliamentary system in the world, have a committee process that allows the public to come before it in order to pronounce themselves how much they like a piece of legislation or how much they don't like it, how to improve it or how to get rid of it. That's the right of the public. You know, Mr. Speaker, we've said this before: Each and every bill that this government has passed since they've come into office has not once gone to committee—not one. Not one bill that you've passed as a government bill has gone into committee. You've gone from second reading to time allocation to third reading, and there has been no time for committee

in between. That's rather unfortunate, because it means to say the government is not giving the public its due, its ability to have its say. When a government starts hiding behind the institution that it runs in this way, using time allocation to block the public out, I think that is problematic.

I was a member of a government that did things that people liked and didn't like. We referred them to committee and the people would come before us and they would say what they liked and didn't like, and you had to accept that. Why? Because this is what Parliament is all about. Parliament isn't a closed club for elected officials only, just for the politicians. A Parliament is about us enacting laws, government and opposition proposing laws, and eventually they get to committee so the public has an opportunity. So this bill, no matter what the timeline is, should go to committee in order to give the public their say.

For that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move the following amendment, and it reads:

Delete everything after "ordered" in the first paragraph and replace it with:

"... to the Standing Committee on General Government; and

"That the Standing Committee on General Government be authorized to meet on Wednesday, September 26, 2018, from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. and Thursday, September 27, from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. for the purpose of public hearings on the bill; and

"That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 31:

"—Notice of public hearings on the Ontario parliamentary channel, the Legislative Assembly's website and Canada NewsWire; and

"—That the deadline for requests to appear be 6 p.m., Monday, September 24, 2018, and;

"—That witnesses be scheduled to appear before the committee on a first come, first served basis; and

"—That each witness will receive up to nine minutes for their presentation, followed by six minutes for questions from committee members, divided equally amongst the recognized parties;

"That the deadline for written submissions be 8 p.m. on Thursday, September 27, 2018; and

"That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee be 9 a.m. on Monday, October 1, 2018; and

"That the committee be authorized to meet on Wednesday, October 3, 2018, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 8 p.m. for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

"That on Wednesday, October 3, 2018, at 5:30 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. At this time, the Chair shall

allow one 20-minute waiting period pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

"That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Thursday, October 4, 2018. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

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

"That when the order for third reading of the bill is called, one hour of debate shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, with 30 minutes apportioned to the government, 20 minutes to the official opposition, seven minutes to the independent Liberal Party members and three minutes to the independent Green Party member. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

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

"That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes, except that the division bell for the vote on the motion for third reading shall be 15 minutes."

I will give this to Will, who will bring it over to the Speaker and the Clerks.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Bisson, the member from Timmins, has actually presented an amendment to government motion number 6. It reads as follows:

"Delete everything"—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Dispense.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I must continue, cold and all.

"Delete everything after 'ordered' in the first paragraph and replace it with:

"... to the Standing Committee on General Government; and

"That the Standing Committee on General Government be authorized to meet on Wednesday, September 26, 2018, from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. and Thursday, September 27, from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. for the purpose of public hearings on the bill; and

"That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 5:

"—Notice of public hearings on the Ontario parliamentary channel, the Legislative Assembly's website and Canada NewsWire; and

"—That the deadline for requests to appear be 6 p.m. on Monday, September 24, 2018; and

“—That witnesses be scheduled to appear before the committee on a first come, first served basis; and

“—That each witness will receive up to nine minutes for their presentation, followed by six minutes for questions from committee members divided equally amongst the recognized parties;

“That the deadline for written submissions be 8 p.m. on Thursday, September 27, 2018; and

“That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 9 a.m. on Monday, October 1, 2018; and

“That the committee be authorized to meet on Wednesday, October 3, 2018, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 8 p.m. for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

“That on Wednesday, October 3, 2018, at 5:30 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all the remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. At this time, the Chair shall allow one 20-minute waiting period pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

0920

“That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Thursday, October 4, 2018. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

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

“That when the order for third reading of the bill is called, one hour of debate shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, with 30 minutes apportioned to the government, 20 minutes to the official opposition, seven minutes to the independent Liberal Party members and three minutes to the independent Green Party member. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

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

“That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes, except that the division bell for the vote on the motion for third reading shall be 15 minutes.”

I now return to the member from Timmins to continue debate.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The reason for this is really simple. As I was saying before, every piece of government legislation that the government has introduced and had

completed second reading debate—they have moved each of those bills directly from second reading over to third reading without any time for public hearings, which is, quite frankly, counter to what this place is all about. You need to allow the public to have their say. That’s why New Democrats are putting this forward.

The government is going to argue, “Oh, my God, but it’ll delay things and it’ll make the crisis worse.” As I said earlier, who created this crisis? Was it the city of Toronto? No, they already had a plan about how to deal with their election. They had worked for three years in order to determine what the size of council should be. Instead, the Premier of the province has a grudge match with the council for whatever reason—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would caution the member again to be careful of imputing motive. The wording that you are using could be interpreted as imputing motive, so I would ask that you be very careful with that. That goes for both sides, as I’ve mentioned earlier.

Please continue.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I’d appreciate if it did go for both sides, because I hear the Premier all the time doing this type of thing when it comes to language in the House. I’m looking at him as the leader of the government and the leader of this House. I’m just following what the Premier does.

I don’t mean that to be combative, but everybody has a motive for what they do. When I stand here and move this motion, I have a motive. My motive is to get the public to come before the committee to be able to have their say. That is a motive, and I’m not being called out of order for that.

I want to end on this particular point: It’s the government who created this crisis. For the government to come before us and say, “Oh, Lord, this is so important. We’ve got to deal with it.” That they’re prepared to even use a “notwithstanding” clause should they not win their appeal in court today, I think, is highly problematic. I think it sets a very, very dangerous precedent. We have never used the “notwithstanding” clause in the history of this province.

Do we have the right to use the “notwithstanding” clause? Of course we do. The government tried to argue the other night that we’re saying, in the opposition, that they don’t have the authority. Parliament is supreme. The Legislature is a power unto itself. It creates laws, and nobody can stop us from creating laws. That is our right; the courts have no jurisdiction over that. But we are a constitutional democracy, which means to say that once we’ve passed a law, if a citizen or other organization or entity thinks that the law is breached in some way or that in some way the law tramples on constitutional rights, they have the right to go before the courts. The courts can pronounce themselves on the constitutionality of our law. That’s what has happened in this case. It was a case where the judge looked at the law and said, “You know what? This does trample on people’s rights in the Constitution and under the charter,” and made his decision.

We’ll find out today what the panel of the three judges will say. It could go either way; that’s the way these things

go. But clearly, this was a question where the court pronounced itself on the legitimacy of our law when it comes to the Constitution. That's all that's happened over here.

The government tries to make it that, "First of all, judges shouldn't do that because we're the elected officials and they're appointed, so they have no say on what we do." What a silly thing for a Premier to say, quite frankly. Do you really want to start electing judges? Think about it: Have elected people decided what another elected person has done? You don't want to get into that; that's a silly system.

We appoint judges for a reason: They're independent from us. They're not politicized. Yes, there are New Democrats; there are Liberal judges; there are Conservative judges. We all know that. But once they get to the bench, they are there to interpret laws and to rule on law. It's as simple as that.

For this government to somehow say that they don't have the right to pronounce themselves on a law that was done in this Legislature that they feel is unconstitutional, based on the arguments that were put before the courts by Rocco and others, I think is just highly inflammatory.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to seeing what the government has to say about us getting into an ability for the public to come before us, and I look forward to the rest of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate on the amendment as presented.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to speak in the morning, and certainly on this issue, which we've been talking a lot about. As you know, we've been here a fair bit speaking about this.

We want to make sure that the council of Toronto is prepared to govern the most effectively they can for the citizens that they're given the privilege to represent. As I stood in this House the other day, I talked a fair bit about it. Again, I don't understand why, if there are 25 MPPs and 25 MPs, 25 city councillors cannot govern the same area.

We're going to continue to move forward with this. We do believe it's in the best interests of Ontarians across the province. I think we all know the reality that if the city of Toronto is moving and is going forward well, then that has huge effects on all of us. Obviously, many of our caucus are from rural Ontario. We need the balance. We need to ensure that both rural Ontario and our urban areas are effective levels of government. We are given a privilege in this province, in this country and in our municipalities to actually have democracy, to ensure that we actually have people for the people. That's exactly what our Premier is trying to do.

All of our caucus is committed, when we got elected here, to stand up every day to make sure that we're doing what we can, and to set the rules so that governments, at all levels that we're able to relate to, have the most effective governments possible, and that we're working for the people. We want effective administration. We want effective government. I can't imagine anyone in this House doesn't want effective government. So at the end of

the day, you would hope that the members of the opposition would support, frankly, that we want to move forward, that we want to have efficiencies.

We've said over and over and over again that if we're able to move forward, as we wish to do, that \$25 million will be saved for the city of Toronto and, more importantly, for the people they serve. That can go towards things like transit. That can go towards things like housing, mental health and health care overall, the things that all of us care about and that the people that we are given the privilege to represent actually have at their disposal, when they need it. We want people to have timely access. We said we would get rid of hallway health care. That's one of the things, again, we want to make sure of. We continue to hear day after day after day from the members of the opposition that they're concerned that people aren't getting transit, they're concerned that people aren't getting housing, despite us actually committing to \$1.9 billion specifically for mental health, the single biggest contribution and commitment ever to mental health in this province. We will deliver that, Mr. Speaker.

I said in here when I did my address the other day that we want certainty. We want everyone to understand what they are able to do. There is a time sensitivity to this, Mr. Speaker. It's very daunting circumstances because of when the election is going to fall. October 22 is not that far down the road for people to make sure they understand who is running and who is going to be representing whom. That's why we've kept pushing this. That's why we have had the unprecedented realities that we've had—a night sitting—because we were so committed to ensuring that everyone knows exactly where they are and what they're doing.

We believe that those people who are running for council—I certainly know that when I decided to run, you knew that there was going to be a 28-day campaign to a 32-day campaign, typically, and I was prepared to do that. In fact, we've run on a 28-day campaign or thereabouts for the three elections I've been in. It's certainly ample, Mr. Speaker. I've had a lot of people coming to me saying, "Why are these municipal elections running so long? Why are those signs up for so long?"

0930

I'm almost now tired of looking at the municipal signs because they've been up so long, and they came right on the heels of our election. I don't understand why—as long as we put in front of everyone, "Here are the rules, here are the areas, here is the timeframe"—people can't accept that. As a candidate or a potential candidate, you have the ability to look at what you understand at that time, before you sign your papers and say, "I'm going to go forward." You know that there's going to be a campaign—or, you can withdraw. Even if you put your name in early, you can still make that decision, Mr. Speaker.

When this legislation is passed, you're going to know exactly how long you have to campaign. You're going to know whether you're still committed. At the end of the day, whether it's 28 days or a longer period, you're going to have the same conviction, you would hope. It shouldn't

be that I'm just coming in because I can now play a game longer. You're going to say, "I want to be that person, I want to be that democratically elected representative, and I want to be there every day," to make sure that, again, you're serving the interests of the people that you're given the privilege to stand in front of and be for and be held accountable by.

At the end of the day, I believe we will—passing this legislation—be able to say to everyone out there, "Here is the campaign, here is what you're running for, here is the area you're going to represent and the people you're going to represent." I certainly don't hesitate to say again: If 25 MPPs can represent that population base in those areas and 25 MPs can serve that population base, I can't understand for the life of me why you can't have 25 municipal councillors.

At the end of the day, the municipalities are a creature of the province; we have the ability. I believe the opposition House leader has just said, again, that Parliament is supreme, that we are here to make the laws. That's what we're doing, is making the laws. He suggested, I think—and I just want to take him up on that—that we said that judges should be elected. I'm not certain that I've ever heard that. I don't think, certainly, that that is what we're suggesting.

What we're saying is there's definitely a distinct reality of we are the lawmakers, we've always been the lawmakers and we will continue to be the lawmakers. At the end of the day, I have the highest regard and the highest respect for our judiciary and our judges. That doesn't mean that just because a judge says something, we don't have the ability to challenge it. There are many others—I think even the members opposite will agree there are others—who have suggested that they were quite surprised by the ruling. We've obviously gone to that appeal today. We're going to hear that ruling from three judges. At the end of the day, I believe the opposition House leader did say that there could be a ruling in favour of our motion that we want to move forward. If that is the case, I hope he will then say, "We will respect the judiciary"—three, instead of one—"that says we are moving forward and we are going to be having this legislation."

At the end of the day, I'd say I think we can always have different interpretations and we can always have different thought processes, whether we agree or not, but we really want to ensure that the rules are interpreted and the judges give their ruling based on the actual law, not their own assessment, not what their own viewpoints are and not what they believe. It's what is the law. That is their role, to interpret and say, "This is where it is." In my reading, what I saw was that they very much didn't like the timing, didn't like how it came out, didn't like this—that doesn't really matter to us. What the ruling is: Is it constitutional? Are we able to?

The members opposite keep making a big deal that it's never been used. That doesn't mean that it's wrong to introduce it. Why would we not respect the people that actually created the "notwithstanding" clause and allow them to truly be able to utilize that? If it's there, they did

it for a reason. They wanted a check and balance. They wanted to be able to ensure that at the end of the day, democratically elected representatives who are given the privilege to make rules have that ability in the laws and are able to have that ability to utilize that tool within our constitutional framework to make sure that, as the opposition House leader said, Parliament is supreme. Just because it's never been used doesn't mean it can't be used and doesn't mean it shouldn't be used. It is there. They've even agreed and said, "We agree that it's there and it's there to be used." Now we're using it, but they're saying, "But you shouldn't," because they don't like why we're using it. They don't like the reality.

Again, I'm going to go back over and over and over again to time allocation and ensuring, in this case, that we believe there is an imminent time frame that we have to get to. We have to ensure that people have certainty—not just the people who are choosing to be candidates and choosing to run, but the people who are actually going to vote on this issue.

Again, let's not forget that we still have a democratically governed system. The people are going to know exactly how long a campaign will be. They're going to know the rules of that campaign. They're going to understand who is running and what areas they're representing. I don't see that as any different than when I step up or you step up, Mr. Speaker, in a provincial campaign. You know exactly how long your campaign is going to be. You know exactly what you're going to do in those 28 days. At the end of the day, the people have made a choice. In your case—glad to see you back. Great to see you back for your third term, Mr. Speaker. People had the ability.

When the opposition comes in and puts in amendments to these types of things, we start to wonder, again, is it about just the optics, what they want to be seen to be doing, as opposed to what it's really going to be governing? What is the reality of what the end result is?

We keep focusing back on the people. We want to ensure that there are more people getting the services that they deserve. The people who want to be able to have mental health, people who want housing, people who want better transit—they can actually get in and out and not have so much stress in their day just from travelling from that gridlock. We've heard nothing in my seven years here but concerns about the gridlock and the concerns that people have about trying to get to work and get home from work and the things that are limited in their personal lives with their children because they can't get home in time.

When I see certain things like an amendment, we want to make sure that we are really, truly, at the end of day not just playing politics, not just trying to get the headline, not just trying to be able to say to their base, "Oh, we're working hard and we're fighting this." What is the real end result? At the end of the day, we continue to stand here, saying, "We believe, and we have conviction, that by changing the size of government for Toronto, there's going to be a better end result." They're going to be more effective, more efficient. They're going to get more of those front-line services and the care that people deserve in a timely manner.

We believe, again, that \$25 million is not a small amount of money over four years for them to be able to save and to ensure that that money goes into the things that, frankly—I will credit the opposition; they are saying that there need to be improvements in transit, that there needs to be more housing, that there needs to be more mental health, and health care across the board. There's \$25 million that could be going to those front-line services. I think, again, we all come here with the intent—all of us, from all parties—to ensure that we are standing up for the people we represent, but we have to look beyond and just say that we're not just doing this, again, for the next election; we're doing this for the benefit of the people.

We've gone through the amendment. At the end of the day, the amendment is going to delay more. They're going to try to put another stick in the spoke of the wheels, if you will, Mr. Speaker. We want to make sure that when we're doing our job, we're doing it in the most effective manner. Sometimes, like in this case, time allocation, we believe, is warranted, because again, going back, hearkening back, October 22 is not that far away.

If people are truly going to have a very clearly delineated set of rules that they know they're running on so that those people who want to step up to the plate, frankly—and I'm honoured to be one of those people who chose to do so and have been given the privilege for seven years now to be in this hallowed chamber, this Legislature, to be able to govern on behalf of the great people of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound but, on a bigger scale, the province of Ontario. I want those people who want to run in the municipal election in Toronto to have exactly that. They need to have certainty. They need to understand: "Here's exactly who I'm going to be representing. Here's the time frame that I'm going to have to run my election campaign."

I have yet to have one member of the opposition give me a solid argument about why, if we can run on a 28-day campaign, those people who are stepping up to run for city council in Toronto can't run on a 28-day campaign. I'm not certain why they won't help us to get there so that we actually all know, with certainty. Rather than going back and forth in here, we could have this done. We could have been here a week ago. Those people, a week ago, could have had the information and have understood what they were doing. A week and a half ago—if they would have voted with our original piece of legislation, we could have actually had those people with certainty. We could have let everyone know. We could have moved on to what they keep saying—all of the important things that we want to be debating, those bills that we could be introducing about health care.

The people that they purport to represent, the less fortunate, who need more services, the people who want mental health services—they keep talking about all of those people, but what are they truly doing today to help them with those front-line, day-to-day services and programs? They're doing nothing to help that. I said in this House a couple of days ago that I have yet to see the

Leader of the Opposition offer one idea that is actually going to help the people of Ontario. She has never once—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. I would ask that the dialogue across the aisles stop so that I can hear what the honourable member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound has to say. As a result of that, I would strongly encourage both sides to stop the dialogue going back and forth so that we can continue to hear.

Please continue.

0940

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I love debate, frankly, and I'm hopeful you'll give me a bit more time. They keep taking my time away, and I'm not going to get everything in in the little 40 minutes that I have to talk about this. Even at my speed, I'm not going to get all of the words in. Even if I go into auctioneer chant style, I'm not certain I'm going to get everything out that I want to say, because I know the members of the opposition are listening intently to what I am saying and want to have a very wholesome debate with me on the merits and the facts, not all the innuendo and not all the partisan politicking.

Interjection: Wholesome debate.

Mr. Bill Walker: Wholesome debate—absolutely.

As I was saying before I had to sit and have it clarified by you of some of the members opposite not going through you to me, I want to ensure that we really do want the members of the opposition to work with us. We want them to actually offer up ideas that are going to be helpful and are actually going to work together with us.

As I was saying, the Leader of the Opposition has not, since we started a new session, since we had the last election, offered one positive thought process. I can recall, in the earlier time of me being here, that the three leaders would actually exchange letters. They would get together and have a chat to try to move us forward with an agenda that we can all support and work on. They would actually send letters and say, "Here's what I think, and I want to meet with you."

I have not even sensed that the Leader of the Opposition wants to reach out and work with our leader. I don't believe that she has even made the attempt to bring ideas to the table, other than a lot of anger and a lot of things that are being said to try to stoke the people outside of this chamber who don't agree with the approach we're taking.

At the end of the day, we are the government. Whether you like it, whether you don't like it, what the numbers are, it doesn't really matter. For the next three-plus years, we are the government, and we want to work with members on all sides of the House to ensure that we actually are doing things for the province of Ontario on getting us back on track.

We inherited a \$335-billion debt. We had a government that was continually running deficits, and I want to point out that the official opposition, the NDP, supported every single budget in my seven years. They supported the Liberals getting us to that point, Mr. Speaker. At the end of the day, we can't continue to do that. The people of Ontario, the majority of people in Ontario—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order, Speaker.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, the standing orders say that we have to be factual. The NDP actually voted against every one of Wynne's budgets when she was in a majority government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): That's not a point of order. I will now return to the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, the government whip, please.

Mr. Bill Walker: Well, once again, I'm probably going to take issue with the opposition House leader. A fact is a fact. If people would go back to Hansard and see how they voted—I certainly know how we voted in this House, and that party has definitely propped up and enabled the Liberal government on many, many items.

Hon. Todd Smith: Ninety-seven per cent of the time.

Mr. Bill Walker: They've certainly been enabling, 97% of the time. At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker—

Hon. Todd Smith: The facts are the facts.

Mr. Bill Walker: The facts are the facts. You can have revisionist history in your mind if you like, but I think Hansard has probably recorded—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Waterloo will come to order. Thank you very much.

Mr. Bill Walker: Talking over me, Mr. Speaker, as you know, isn't probably going to work, so I hope that at the end of the day we're able to have cordial debate in here. I hope we're able to have cordial debate. The members actually have to look in that mirror every day. They have to stand in front of their constituents and actually say what they did. They do it, I do it. I'm okay with how I voted in my seven years. I did not support the Liberal government, which ran up the highest debt and deficit in history—

Hon. Todd Smith: Well, they're continuing to defend those Liberal policies every day now. They're the official opposition.

Mr. Bill Walker: Yes, they almost want to again enable what's going on. I can't fathom that they want to do that. They like to sometimes be able to say publicly that they didn't, but we know what the facts are. Hansard will have recorded that, Mr. Speaker, so people can go and search it out and find their own information.

We saw a lot of issues in this House where it was like this between the Liberals and the New Democratic Party. That's their right. That's their choice to do that. But at the end of the day, I hope they'll respect—they're going to use numbers, but at the end of the day, as I have said in here a couple of times already, we are the government. The people of Ontario, through a democratically held election, chose us to be the government under the rules—whether you like it, whether you don't like it, whether you want to spin numbers; it doesn't really matter. But we are the government, and we want to ensure—as I say, we keep offering and reaching out and saying, "Work with us. Help us. Help us move the province of Ontario forward."

Opposition—I sat there for seven years, as you did, Mr. Speaker, so we know very well what the role of Her Majesty's official opposition is, and that is to hold the government to account. But there's nothing that stops them from saying, "I want to actually work with you. I want to reach across and give you one idea." Just one idea is what we want to have.

Whether it's talking about this amendment or we're talking about the challenge to the bill, we want them to work with us. We want them to lower the temperature, if you will, at the end of the day, to work with the government, to actually offer ideas. It would be great to see the Leader of the Opposition step forward with an idea that's proactive and solution-based, rather than trying to score political points and try to get some media.

We want them to ensure that they're thinking again in the long term, not just the next election cycle, not just this week of headlines, not just what they're going to be able to say to their followers. What are we really doing here, all 124 of us, to ensure that the province is better at the end of this four-year mandate? That's what we've done.

This amendment is not going to help us do that. This amendment is yet again, as I've used the terminology, putting another stick in the spokes of the bicycle. It's trying to grind it to a halt because they're not agreeing with it. That is democracy. That is their right, certainly, to be able to argue their point, to be able to debate—which would be really nice, to have a solid, factual debate in here, rather than going along with a lot of spin and a lot of emotion and a lot of issues that really just get people fired up.

Again, I think even some of the language that's being used continually by not only the leader but some of her members is inflammatory. It's trying to stoke dissent. It's certainly not in the spirit of working collaboratively and reaching out and having that trust that, regardless of our political stripes, we can sit at a table.

I know many of the members of the opposition. I'm getting to know some of the new members and I look forward to working with them as well. I've worked on a lot of different issues with members of the official opposition and we've got things done, as many of my colleagues have. But you only do that if there's a spirit of collegiality and there's a spirit of intent to work together beyond political points and beyond partisan talking points.

The official opposition doesn't like the stance we've taken. They don't like the direction we've taken. Again, I'm going to quote the official opposition House leader, who did say that Parliament is supreme. So if Parliament is supreme, and we've put a bill on the table, then I'm not certain why, after they've debated, they won't say, "Okay, we'll move on. We'll start looking at things like how we improve transit, how we improve housing, how we improve mental health, how we improve services and programs for the less fortunate in our society." Why will they not let us move on with that? Why will they not allow the city of Toronto to have that same opportunity?

In this case, I believe that there is going to be a ruling this afternoon. We don't know, of course, what that ruling

is going to be, but certainly the people in the legal field, the judicial experts I've read about, are saying they were quite shocked by the ruling of the original judge. Obviously it's going back to the courts today. We're going to find out what three of them think.

I hope that there aren't going to be more games, that they're not going to find another way to play a wedge if that ruling comes out in our favour. I hope they'll step back and say, "We've done our job. We've stepped up as opposition and we've challenged the government on this policy." But I'm hopeful that then they'll turn the page. I truly hope that all members, particularly the Leader of the Opposition, will take a much more conciliatory approach, that she'll want to work with us, that she'll want to find ways.

Certainly it's her right and privilege—and she should; that's their job—to challenge us. But you can do that in a lot of ways. You can do that in a way that the public will respect and that will garner more respect, in fact, as opposed to just bringing the angry, negative challenge to all things that we do.

Just because we're the government doesn't mean we're wrong. I think people in this House immemorial have said, "If it's a good idea, let's do it," but if it's a bad idea, then obviously you're going to challenge it. But at the end of the day, democracy is democracy. We were elected. We are here for the next three-plus years. And we want to get things done and put this province in a better place.

As you're well aware—certainly I am—we've inherited a huge challenge, the most debt of any province in Confederation, more debt, almost, than the federal government. And that's happened over a pretty short period of time. All the other governments of Ontario, up until this last 15-year reign of Liberal government, had not accumulated nearly the level of debt that we have today.

I want to remind people: It was the Liberals who created this nightmare. We have to spend a billion dollars a month on interest payments. That's a billion dollars that's not going to the people we all should be caring about, that we all want to improve the circumstances for.

I can't fathom anyone out there who would want to continue down that path. I'm not certain how members opposite—not including our members who are opposite, obviously; I do want to clarify that we do have members on the opposite side of the House who perform a great role for us and who are as much a part of our government and our caucus as we are who are on this side of the House. The reality is, we just didn't have enough seats for them all to be able to sit on this side.

I think it's great that we have them over there. They can try to do some of that bridging between the other members who were elected and try to help find ways to move forward for all of us.

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I've never been able to understand any member supporting the previous Liberal government when they wanted to continue to overspend and know that we were racking up that much debt that, again, is not going to the front-line services—a billion dollars a month to an interest

payment. There's not one person getting more ODSP. There's not one person getting more Ontario Works. There's not one person getting transit. There's not one person getting more housing. There's not one person getting the mental health services they so significantly need.

I hope that we can move forward today. I'm hopeful that we're not going to support this amendment. It's, again, just a delay tactic. It's trying to slow things down rather than move us forward so that we can actually govern to the best of our ability.

They keep talking about the people of Toronto; that we're "damaging the people of Toronto" were, I think, words that they've thrown out there. The opposition leader, again, said that the "notwithstanding" clause has never been used. That doesn't mean it can't, it doesn't mean it shouldn't and it doesn't mean that it's not able to be used. I think he did use the words that the government "has the right" to use the "notwithstanding" clause. Well, if we had the right—and in this case I think we've tried to suggest and paint a pretty clear picture—there's a huge time concern, a very, very limited runway for this election to be held properly for the people to be able to make wise choices: for the people who want to run to make wise choices and for the people who are going to elect them to make wise choices.

At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, the official opposition House leader has said that Parliament is supreme. Parliament brought a bill to the table and said, "We want to move forward with this piece of legislation. We want to get certainty for the people of Toronto." It's one step to helping them get through things like transit, housing, mental health and health care generally.

I'm hopeful that they will stop things like an amendment to an amendment to just slow down the system. They've made their point. I think they have made it very strongly. I think they have publicly gone out and made a lot of noise. That doesn't make them right. It doesn't mean that just because they make a lot of noise and a lot of bluster, we're going to step down and agree with them. I think that at the end of the day they've served the purpose of opposition well, but now is the time for a collective rethink to say, "Do you know what? How do we work together? How do we actually do things that are going to help the people of Ontario?" How are we going to ensure that the people they keep purporting to help—that they actually want to step up and do it?

I'm going to issue that challenge to the Leader of the Opposition again. Just once, I'd like her to step up and find a positive thing to offer to our government. I want her to be able to offer to meet with our leader and find something significant, to say, "How do we work together? How do we move forward and ensure that the people of Ontario are actually going to have better services, better front-line programs and care?" because they actually want to work with us, as opposed to being obstinate, as opposed to wanting to just yell because they're not agreeing with the position we take. Mr. Speaker, that's never going to get us anywhere. A number of members I've spoken to want to

work with us. I'm not certain why we can't get the leader and a few other members who are playing the leadership roles to sit.

Mr. Speaker, I know a number of my colleagues wanted, and I wanted, a ton more time, because I think there's lots still to be said, but at this point I'm going to defer to my colleagues. The member from Whitby, I believe, was going to follow me, and I can't wait to hear what he has to say.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Good morning, Speaker. It's always a pleasure to see you in the chair.

I'm pleased to join the debate today on the amendment put forward by the official opposition. I do it in the context of someone who had the privilege of serving, as you know, Speaker, for 13 years as a regional councillor, both for the town of Whitby and the region of Durham. During my time on regional council, what was clear to me was the importance of local government.

This particular amendment before us is really just another example of the official opposition first of all trying to slow the process down and, in the course of that, limit the importance of local government. What Bill 31 does—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order.

Mr. Lorne Coe: What Bill 31 does, Speaker, is emphasize that all levels of government must work efficiently. I know you understand that because you've worked extensively with local government. It emphasizes that all levels of government must work efficiently and effectively for the people of the province.

As the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing emphasized earlier this week, the proposed legislation has multiple parts. I want to highlight a couple of them because they're material to why we're here this morning and where we want to be. He explained the proposed changes for the city of Toronto for the members of the House—and he did it really well—and he drew, as I am, from his experience both as a mayor and city councillor in the area that he represents. Equally adept was the Attorney General, who spoke to the legal aspects surrounding the legislation, Bill 31.

Speaker, when the proposed changes in this legislation were first introduced, as you'll recall, under the Better Local Government Act, our government spoke to the vision we have to review the way regional governments function. That's a constructive aspect. It's the way forward. It's visionary. We must ensure that they are serving the needs of their communities. That's what constituents expect. You understand that. Others in this chamber understand that. But, once again, we have an amendment that gets in the way of progress.

When I talk about ensuring that they're serving the needs of their communities, it is at the core of what they do. It's at the core of what all of us elected officials do, Speaker.

Our government for the people believes that regions in Ontario should be the ones to make important decisions

about how they serve their residents. They can best speak to their communities' needs and they can best make decisions for their residents. That includes how they select their regional chair.

It's important in this discussion, Speaker—and I know you appreciate this. It's a contextual piece; it's about regional council history. I know you understand that because you're very active in your constituency and you work hard with your level of government, particularly at the municipal level. But two years ago—let's go back two years—the previous government changed the Municipal Act to require that regional municipalities select their chair by direct election. Municipalities that used to choose to appoint their regional chairs were no longer allowed to choose. There was one exception—and you'll remember this. The exception was Oxford county, which was allowed to continue to appoint one of their elected officials to also serve as their regional chair.

What the government is proposing is to reverse the changes that were introduced two years ago—changes that were unfair. We heard input, and you did too. They were unfair to regions that already had processes in place that worked for their local communities, Speaker. Four regional councils had to change their processes: York, Peel, Niagara region and the district of Muskoka. Four, Speaker.

What the government is proposing is to return to the system that was used in the 2014 election before the previous government's legislation was enacted. This previous system is one that these regions are familiar with—very important—one that they decided worked best for them. Just stay with that for a moment, Speaker: worked best for them. So we are reversing the changes imposed by the previous government for this year's election. In the future, regions would decide for themselves how to select their chair.

Speaker, let's turn for a moment to two-tiered governments that I had the privilege of serving on for a number of years: the region of Durham, which is the upper-tier government, and the town of Whitby, which is the lower tier. Going forward, we want to give that decision-making power back to the regions because they understand. I know the members who are here this morning understand this. That's at the root, because they understand better than anyone how this two-tiered municipal system works.

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In Ontario's regional government model, voters are represented at two levels: at a local municipal level—like the town of Whitby, which I had the privilege of serving for 13 years—and regionally, where municipalities come together to address issues that affect their larger regional area. In the region of Durham, that's eight municipalities.

Speaker, regional governments, working with their member municipalities, decide what is best for their individual communities and the region as a whole. Regional government is a level of government that is close to the people. That's been my experience; it continues to be my experience. They deal with everything from garbage pickup to policing to paramedics, from daycare to

retirement to long-term-care homes, as is the case in the region of Durham. They administer for it. They know what their local communities need and they are more than capable of deciding how their regional government should operate. This is something they did on their own for years—years—and we are confident they can continue to do so, because every region is unique. Speaker, you know that.

Let's take as an example—because I think examples are material to our conversation here this morning—Peel region. This region has laid out 11 priorities for its regional council. Upper-tier governments undertake strategic planning sessions, Speaker, and Peel region is one. Some of those priorities in Peel region include affordable housing, planning and managing growth, and increasing waste diversion, and priorities such as modernizing service delivery, attracting top talent to the region and making the movement of goods more efficient. Taken together, these are all things that the region chose as important for their region overall and for their municipalities.

When you take a moment and you step back, as I do periodically, and when you scan the region of Durham's strategic plan, you notice one thing: The majority of the municipalities in this region are focused on urban growth. That means they're dealing with urban issues. They know about the demand for real estate in the 905 and the increased cost of living.

Downtown Mississauga is not a farming community. However, you can bet that agriculture is a number one priority in Niagara region. Niagara boasts some of this province's finest wineries and farms. The region attracts tourists who contribute to the economic prosperity of their communities. Niagara needs a regional council that stands up for farmers and for the tourism that this industry brings into the region and local economy. Speaker, while Peel and Niagara may share some of the same needs, these regions are very different. They rely on very different economic drivers to survive and thrive.

York region is another example. Its strategic plan focuses on urban growth and transportation. We know that in the earlier discussions of Bill 31 we talked about transportation and we talked about economic development, but we also talked about affordable housing. Not surprisingly, affordable housing is also high on the region of York's priority list.

Speaker, York is experiencing the same pressures that most of the municipalities in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area are feeling right now, dealing with an increasing population and high demand for homes. I say this and I provide this, again, as a contextual piece and a discussion of the amendment before us. I say it to underline the strengths and priorities of each area, but what is also clear in this discussion is not all regions are the same.

I earlier referred to my experiences as a municipal councillor. I'm honoured to stand here before you as a representative of Whitby, and I'm privileged to have served my community in various capacities as a municipal councillor.

I've also been privileged to lend a hand, as you have, with a lot of community groups like Whitby Sunrise Rotary Club, the Sports Hall of Fame, and Hearth Place Cancer Support Centre. I'm not the only one, though, in this chamber. I'm not the only one, Speaker, who has given back to their communities. I know you've done a lot of sterling work in that regard and continue to do so, and I commend you for that. Premier Doug Ford was a Toronto city councillor for four years, and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who introduced this bill earlier this week, was the mayor of Brockville for 10 years.

Not unlike Premier Ford, I've devoted myself to public service and feel privileged to continue to do so here at the Legislature. As a former municipal politician in a two-tiered municipality, I can safely say that regions know what is best for their local community.

Speaker, I'm just about to conclude and hand off the debate to some of my other colleagues on the government side of the House who want to enter the discussion, but let me end this way: What Bill 31 is doing is proposing to return decision-making powers back to the regions. In future elections they should be able to select their heads of council. When our government for the people initially announced our intention to propose these changes, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing said, "It doesn't matter if you're in a rural or urban municipality, what you see time and time again is that the municipal level of government is the closest to the day-to-day lives of most people."

I'll conclude with this: The minister said, "This is another example of the province getting out of the way and making local government worker harder, smarter and more effectively to make life better for everyone" in the province of Ontario.

Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to enter the debate today. I look forward to the subsequent comments from my colleagues on the government side of the House.

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

Mr. Doug Downey: I rise to speak on the amendment. I'm quite pleased—very pleased—to announce, as others looking at it through email may know by now, that the stay was granted. This will allow the city clerk of Toronto to move forward with certainty, in the kind of certainty that we were achieving through Bill 31 and that was being frustrated by amendments like this.

The election will go forward. We're very positive about the result. It's time to put the political games behind us and some of the obstructionist amendments and whatnot. We look forward to it. We look forward to getting back to city council focusing on what they need to do in housing and infrastructure.

We'll continue the appeal. I want to be clear, Mr. Speaker. We will continue the appeal, but the stay creates certainty for the coming election on October 22.

My colleague before me was talking about his experience in government—in municipal governments and regional governments. I think it would be interesting for this House—I want to mention some of the municipal experience that exists in the government benches.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Minister Clark—he introduced the legislation, of course—was the mayor of Brockville. I don’t think that’s a surprise to anybody.

The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, Amanda Simard, was a municipal councillor from Russell. The member from Markham–Unionville, Billy Pang, was a school board trustee. The Minister of Finance, Mr. Fedeli, was the mayor of North Bay.

The member from Whitby, who was just speaking, was a town councillor and regional councillor for 13 years. The Minister of Transportation, Minister Yakabuski, was a municipal councillor. The member from Sarnia–Lambton, Bob Bailey, was a township councillor.

The Minister for Seniors and Accessibility, Minister Cho, was a city councillor. The member from Kitchener South–Hespeler, Amy Fee, right beside me, was a school board trustee. The member for Oxford, Ernie Hardeman, was a mayor. The member from Markham–Thornhill, Logan Kanapathi, was a municipal councillor for Markham. The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Jim McDonell, was a mayor. The Minister of Infrastructure, Mr. McNaughton, served three terms as a councillor. The member for Perth–Wellington, Randy Pettapiece, was a two-term councillor. The member for Sault Ste. Marie, Ross Romano, was a councillor. The Premier was a municipal councillor.

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I was a municipal councillor for a few terms, and I served on the Ontario Small Urban Municipalities board for a term, so I have a perspective across the province on municipal issues. I come at this issue, the municipal issue, with ground experience, and our caucus comes at this with ground experience. We have our ear to the ground in the municipal world. The Minister of Municipal Affairs mentioned the almost 600 consultations at AMO recently—600. That is unprecedented engagement with our municipal partners.

In addition to serving on a council myself, being involved in OSUM and being involved in AMO directly—the Minister of Municipal Affairs was the president of AMO many years ago—I also hold a master’s of law in municipal and development law, so I’ve spent time academically studying what happens in municipalities, how they work and how they don’t work. I have a passion for this area. I practise law in municipal. I advise municipalities. I advise individual councillors, school board trustees, city clerks, planners. It’s been part of my life for over 20 years.

We don’t come at this lightly. We come at this with the best interests of the people of Toronto, the best interests of the province of Ontario, because it is important—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Timmins will come to order.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Do not challenge me.

Mr. Doug Downey: Mr. Speaker, I’m sorry to the member opposite if I am impugning motive to myself, which I don’t actually understand, but that’s okay. This is in line with the kind of amendment that I’m talking about. It’s really just a bit of a squirrel-type tactic.

Beyond all the municipal experience and the ground game that we have in our caucus—on both sides of the House, I may add, because the people of Ontario recognize that they want that experience put to work and they sent 76 of us here to do it—the people of Ontario expect their municipal politicians to be responsive and able to address their issues.

This is something that we’re hearing about from the people of Toronto. You don’t have to be an MPP from Toronto to hear from people in Toronto. We all have friends, colleagues and former clients who are in Toronto, who are sending emails. I am getting so many emails and phone calls from people in Toronto saying, “Keep going. Make this happen. We need to get infrastructure moving. We need to get transportation moving. We need to get things done.”

All of us are hearing the same thing. All members of this House are hearing the same thing. Some are admitting it; some are not. But we’re all getting those emails. We recognize things aren’t working and work is not getting done in the city of Toronto. Look, social housing is suffering. Their budget process is suffering. The bureaucracy is growing and there’s no greater output. The infrastructure is behind. The most common building that is happening in the city of Toronto is the building of roadblocks. We need to deal with that. We are dealing with that. With this stay there is certainty for the clerk to move forward.

The opposition may say, “But look at all the things that we’re dealing with. Look at all the things a councillor does. We need more people to do it all.” All I can say is, we should never confuse motion with action—never confuse that. Just because there’s lots of commotion, it doesn’t mean anything is getting done. That’s what we’re seeing: a lot of commotion. We’re seeing day-long meetings at city hall. There’s another politician that talks about this kind of action, about lots of noise and lots of motion but no action. The phrase is, “All hat and no cattle.”

Further with the amendment, the other interesting thing about the city of Toronto is that one third of the municipal councillors are calling for this change. Now, I sat on a council of eight, plus one as mayor—nine. I can’t even imagine three of the councillors standing up and saying, “Make us smaller. Get us down to almost half our size.”

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

I will remind the member from Barry–Springwater–Oro-Medonte that you have time left, should you choose to use it, at the appropriate time.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now it is 10:15. This House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would like to welcome all the visitors who are here with us today in the House.

REPORT, INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that the following document was tabled: a report concerning the review of cabinet ministers' and opposition leaders' expense claims, complete as of September 14, 2018, from the Office of the Integrity Commissioner.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would ask for the House's attention. I wish to make a brief statement on part VI of the standing orders, specifically standing orders 23(h) and 23(i), which state that it is inappropriate in debate for a member to make "allegations against another member" and it is inappropriate in debate for a member to impute "false or unavowed motives to another member."

From time to time in recent days, I have reminded members that imputing motive on the part of another member is not appropriate and makes it much more difficult for the Speaker to maintain order and decorum, which is the Speaker's basic responsibility as explained in standing order 13.

Once again, I want to implore members that imputing false motives against another member is not appropriate, it is not helpful and, subject to the judgment of the Chair, it is contrary to the standing orders.

I know that all members are honourable, and no member should deliberately wish to be in breach of the standing orders. However, today I feel compelled to make something clear to all members. If, in the opinion of the Chair, the imputing of false motives continues to occur, the Chair may ask the member to withdraw the statement. If in this instance the offending member refuses to withdraw or persists in the behaviour in defiance of standing orders 23(h) and 23(i) and the Chair's ruling on them, the Chair may exercise his or her authority to call for further debate or the next question, and the offending member may lose the floor.

Thank you very much. It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question is to the Deputy Premier: Is it the government's plan to plow ahead with an election in Toronto despite today's decision, with Bill 5 still being appealed and the chaos around Toronto's election process certain to continue?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, through you to the Leader of the Opposition: We're pleased that the Court of Appeal has granted the stay. This will allow the city clerk to go forward with a 25-ward election that is aligned with federal and provincial boundaries. It's a very positive result for the people of Toronto.

I ask through you, Speaker, to the Leader of the Opposition: Let's stop the political games. Let's move forward on an effective and efficient city council through the 25 wards—

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

Interjections.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Deputy Premier: This falls into the category of "just because you can doesn't mean you should."

After never mentioning it once on the campaign trail, the Premier decided to rewrite the rules for municipal elections that were already under way, throwing municipal elections into chaos and trampling people's basic rights.

Now, many doubt at this point in time that free and fair elections can actually be conducted in the city of Toronto, and the courts have yet to give their final determination because now the appeal is stayed. But the government continues to plow ahead. Is that what constitutes success in Doug Ford's Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, I will ask the Leader of the Opposition of to refer to the Premier as the Premier, not by his personal name.

Response? Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, Speaker, through you to the Leader of the Opposition: This is a very positive result for the citizens of Toronto. We can now, on October 22, have an effective and efficient 25-person council that can make those important decisions, decisions that our government has talked about numerous times in this House—things like transit and infrastructure and housing. After October 22 we look forward to working with Toronto's next mayor and council and delivering on those priorities to Torontonians.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Let's not forget that the appeal has not actually been decided. Many doubt that Toronto can now hold a fair election, or whether it will be legally valid.

Canada has a history as a democracy of holding free and fair elections, but the Premier seems happy to roll the dice, proceed with an election and let the chips fall where they may. Is that the sort of history the Deputy Premier wants to make?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, Speaker, through you to the Leader of the Opposition: I'm going to read some of the court's decision. This is the court's decision:

"We have concluded that there is a strong likelihood that application judge erred in law and that the Attorney General's appeal to this court will succeed."

"It is not in the public interest to permit the impending election to proceed on the basis of a dubious ruling that invalidates legislation duly passed by the Legislature."

This is what we've been saying all along, Speaker. Again, through you to the Leader of the Opposition: We are committed to working with the city of Toronto and the clerk's office to have a 25-person council after October 22 that we can work with. That's what we're doing today.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Deputy Premier. We know that the Premier has been obsessed with proving that he can do this. He has talked endlessly about his old enemies at his old job at city hall; he literally barricaded himself inside the Legislature in the dead of night while citizens were locked outside—

Interjections.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: He spent untold sums fighting in the courts and keeping staff here at all hours. But the question has never been whether he could do it; it was whether he should do it.

Did the Deputy Premier really get into public life to help the Premier execute his petty vendettas at all costs?

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Next question—or rather, response. I apologize.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, Speaker, through you to the Leader of the Opposition: She wants to talk about freedom of expression. I'm actually going to quote from the court decision today, where they mention that particular fact. Here's the quote:

"While the change brought about by Bill 5 is undoubtedly frustrating for candidates who started campaigning in May 2018, we are not persuaded that their frustration amounts to a substantial interference with their freedom of expression."

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Again, Speaker, we have made Bill 5. Now, because of the decision today, it will finally allow us to move forward and provide that certainty that our government has always wanted for October 22, a certainty where those 25 wards will cover those municipal councillors just like they cover provincial politicians in this House, or federal politicians. It's the same boundaries. It's going to provide that—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, we've all been sent here to do important work for families, and when we debate bills we're supposed to ask the tough questions: whether the policy is effective, whether it will help people, whether it's a good idea. Unfortunately, the standard of

this government seems to be, "Can we get away with this?"

Ontario families are facing challenging times. Does the Deputy Premier think that that's good enough?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, Speaker, through you to the Leader of the Opposition: I'm going to again quote the court. The court said, "The candidates were and are still free to say what they want to say to the voters. The inconvenience candidates will experience because of the change from 47 to 25 wards does not prevent or impede them from saying what they want to say about the issues arising in the election."

Again, Speaker, I want to emphasize to the Leader of the Opposition: Let's put aside these political games. Let's work together with that new council. We want to deal with the new council on housing issues and infrastructure issues and transit issues. Why won't the Leader of the Opposition accept this decision? Let's move forward.

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm shocked that somehow the minister thinks question period is a political game, Speaker. It's actually our duty to hold the government to account. Families need shorter hospital wait times. They need safe schools and good jobs. They're looking to the government to focus on those priorities and deliver for them. Instead, they see a Premier focused on former enemies and ancient grudges, who won't lift a finger to help a working mom on minimum wage but will move heaven and earth to eliminate political opponents at city hall.

The Deputy Premier and her fellow all-stars know that this has been a wasteful debate on bad policy. At what point will she and her fellow caucus members tell the Premier to get his priorities straight?

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, to the Leader of the Opposition: Again, I'm going to keep reading her these quotes because she needs to understand the importance of what happened this morning. The Ontario Court of Appeal said, "Given our tentative conclusion that Bill 5 does not suffer from constitutional infirmity, we have no hesitation in finding that the balance of convenience favours granting a stay."

Speaker, we're here today, and I again commit to the clerk of the city of Toronto: We're going to work with you. We're going to work with you under this ruling this morning to have that 25-councillor election and to be able to, on October 22, work with that mayor and council on the important issues for Torontonians. We're wanting to move forward with Bill 5, and, again, I'll ask the members opposite to do the same.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who needs to know that an appeal is still ongoing; it has just been stayed at this moment.

Bill 5 was introduced by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on July 30, but the ministry says that there are—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order on the government side.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Bill 5 was introduced by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on July 30, but the ministry says that there are no records of the minister being told to draft the bill. I'm guessing that it didn't appear by magic, so did the all-star Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing draft Bill 5?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, Speaker, through you to the Leader of the Opposition: Again, this is just more political games from the opposition, who continually stand up for—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Opposition benches, come to order.

Hon. Steve Clark: I didn't do a freedom of information on the NDP to find out if they ever used the words "efficient and effective local government." I think I know that there would be no responsive records to that either.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Cutting Toronto council wasn't in the throne speech. It wasn't in the PC platform, not that there was even a PC platform. But someone told government lawyers to draft Bill 5. We asked through an FOI whether the minister was told to do it, and the response was that there was no record of the minister being told to draft Bill 5, no description of what was to be done, no memo telling the minister to cancel some regional chair elections but not other regional chair elections.

Was the all-star minister warming the bench while the bill was being drafted?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, Speaker, I'm going to use very parliamentary language. I'm not going to talk about her campaign during the last election. I'm going to talk about what the Premier and many of us spoke about every day in the campaign, and that's about reducing the size and cost of government, the fact that we want government to work effectively and efficiently.

The fact of the matter is that she can say all she wants, but Bill 5 is going to provide that effective and efficient and streamlined council. On election day and the day after the election, we'll be there to work with our government on those important issues for the citizens of Toronto. That's the bottom line.

TAXATION

Mr. David Piccini: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. This morning, people across Ontario were elated to wake and receive news of relief at the pumps. On my commute in today from Northumberland–Peterborough South, I saw motorists lined up on County Road 2 at gas stations all across my riding. They were lined up waiting to fuel, excited at the prospect of paying a few cents less for their fuel.

Mr. Speaker, the proof is in exactly what we've been saying: The people of Ontario can't afford paying additional premiums on gas. We all know that under the NDP, we would have been paying a lot more for gas. The people of Ontario can't afford a carbon tax. Times are tight, and the Premier promised that relief is on the way.

Can the Minister of the Environment please explain to the House how these changes, reducing the cost of gas—

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

Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member for Northumberland–Peterborough South: Thank you for that question. As the member said, this is something that Doug Ford has been speaking about. He spoke in this Legislature. Many of us in the governing party have talked about the fact that help was on the way and that one of the ways that help was on the way was removing the regressive, job-killing cap-and-trade program.

One of the first pieces of evidence of that, we said, would be a reduction in prices at the pump. As has been reported in the media now, as all of us have witnessed with the lineups at the pump—a 4.6% reduction in gas prices because of eliminating cap-and-trade. That's action that this government promised. A 5.7% reduction in diesel prices: That's what this government promised. Promise made, promise kept.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to remind the Minister of the Environment that it would be helpful if he called the Premier "Premier," not by his personal name.

Supplementary?

Mr. David Piccini: I'd like to thank the minister for his answer. They just don't get it, Mr. Speaker: Not everyone can hop on the TTC. Too many families told me during the election that their commute to take their kids to hockey, to take their kids to soccer—they couldn't afford gas prices. This Premier promised relief is on the way. This Premier has delivered. Seeing the lineup at the gas pumps this morning is a true testament to the relief that families need.

Interjections.

Mr. David Piccini: You're out of touch. You just don't get it.

Georgian College business professor Norm Smith recognized the work that we've done and stated, "We're seeing carbon taxes coming off, and as a result, you can see prices coming down." Can the minister explain to this House what this government is doing to ensure that we stay true to our promise that relief is on the way and residents will receive relief in our gas prices?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, I can understand the frustration in the NDP. I can understand it. They talk about the highest carbon tax in the world. We took action. One of this government's first acts was to repeal the regulation and that sent the message to the natural gas companies that they could take the pressure off Ontarians. That's why we can now expect to see—and we have seen—4.6% reductions in the price of gas and 5.7% reductions in diesel fuel. This will be part of the \$260 for every family that we will

see reduced every year. We will start to see natural gas prices come down next month.

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Mr. Speaker, this is a government taking action. This is a government keeping its promises: money in people's pockets. Promise made, promise kept.

NATURAL GAS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure. There currently exists a \$100-million grant program to fund the expansion of natural gas into rural areas. Is the minister cancelling this funding?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much to the member opposite for this very important question.

I'd first like to begin by thanking all those MPPs in all parties here at the Legislature for attending the very successful opening day of the International Plowing Match in Pain Court. Furthermore, I'm very proud to say that almost all of the government members, including most members of cabinet and the Premier, attended the opening night reception and the parade yesterday. Thanks to all my colleagues on the government side.

Mr. Speaker, we made a very important campaign commitment to open Ontario up for business and to lower energy costs. This afternoon, I'm pleased to say that I will be tabling the Access to Natural Gas Act, and I look forward to talking more about this in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I thought it was a straightforward question, and I look forward to seeing if I get an answer in this part.

The PC platform says its natural gas expansion program is based on "enabling private sector participation." I don't know what this means since almost all natural gas in Ontario is already delivered by a single private monopoly. But the platform says there will be a \$100-million saving, which tells me the natural gas expansion grant is being cancelled and that means someone else will have to make up the difference. I'm pretty sure the private sector is not going to just give away \$100 million.

Isn't "enabling private sector participation" just a fancy way for the minister to say he's cutting his grant program and increasing natural gas prices?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much again for this question. We will talk more this afternoon about our details in the Access to Natural Gas Act, but I'm proud to say that this government over the next number of years is going to provide natural gas to almost 80 communities across the province. In the next number of years, we're going to have almost 35,000 new additional natural gas customers across the province.

Mr. Speaker, this is one of the greatest things that we can do to expand natural gas to rural and remote communities, to open Ontario up for business and to lower energy costs for those people living in rural and northern communities in our province.

I'd also like to remind the members opposite that switching to natural gas will save almost \$2,500 per year

per household. Starting on October 1, we're going to reduce natural gas bills by \$80 a year for families and \$285 for small businesses.

TAXATION

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Ontario has made significant progress in reducing emissions, but the people of Ontario have made significant sacrifices to achieve these results. We have been taxed and taxed and taxed. The cap-and-trade carbon tax was just another example of that. It was a hidden tax that was buried in the prices of fuel at the pumps.

Eliminating this tax and lowering gas prices will put more money in the pockets of moms and dads. Eliminating this tax and lowering gas prices supports our workers and small business owners in our big cities as well as our small towns.

Speaker, this morning drivers across Ontario woke up to a pleasant surprise. Some relief had arrived. Can the Minister of the Environment update the House on the progress we are making?

Hon. Rod Phillips: I thank the member from Mississauga-Erin Mills for his question. He is quite right: Ontarians have made a significant contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The carbon footprint of this province is 30% lower than it was in 1990. But, Mr. Speaker, there is still more for us to do. That's why we will bring forward a plan to this Legislature, a plan that will reduce greenhouse gases, a real plan.

In the meantime, we are fulfilling our promise, a promise that was made to put money back in the pockets of Ontario families, a promise to get rid of the regressive, job-killing cap-and-trade program, a promise that is now being realized with that 4.6-cents-per-litre reduction that has been widely reported. Experts, people like Dan McTeague, a former Liberal MP who now reports on such things, confirm that this is the result of this government's actions.

Money in pockets and an environment plan that works: promise made, promise kept.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I would like to thank the minister for this answer. Still to the Minister of the Environment: This morning, my constituents in Mississauga-Erin Mills on their way to school or to work were thrilled to see a long overdue drop in prices at the pump. Our government promised to make life more affordable for Ontarians. That help was finally on the way.

After consulting with my constituents during the campaign and over the summer, our government had a clear mandate to get rid of the cap-and-trade carbon tax. They wanted to keep more of their own hard-earned money in their pockets and not in the Liberal cap-and-trade slush fund.

Lowering gas prices, reducing energy costs, cancelling cap-and-trade: Can the Minister of the Environment elaborate on why these initiatives are so important to Ontarians?

Hon. Rod Phillips: I thank the member for his question. This is so important because Ontarians have paid enough. There has been pressure on the average Ontario family for too many years: too many regulations that affect their lives, too much taxation that affects their lives. That's why this plan is part of a bigger package when it comes to reducing hydro rates; when it comes to making natural gas more available and affordable, which we heard about today; when it comes to a whole series of initiatives, including eliminating the regressive, job-killing cap-and-trade program, to put money back in people's pockets.

While the opposition carps about the fact that this government isn't making a difference for the people of Ontario, we are. We are making a difference; we are putting money in their pockets: 4.6 cents per litre, 5.7 cents for diesel. And that's just the beginning, Mr. Speaker. There's more to come.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question this morning is to the President of the Treasury Board. Early this summer, the government flew in Gordon Campbell to conduct an Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry into Ontario's finances. The government received the report over a week ago, but it has still not been made public. You know Ontarians are looking for transparency, so I ask the minister, where is the report?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member opposite: I want to congratulate the member on her new role as critic for not only the President of the Treasury Board but my good friend the Minister of Finance.

This government is committed to ensuring accountability and trust when it comes to public finances. It is time to stop digging and figure out how big the hole is. This is why our government launched this Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry. And this inquiry is only a part of our commitment to the state of the province's finances. We will also contribute to the line-by-line review already under way.

I also want to acknowledge the Minister of Finance, who has led the charge on this commission of inquiry. We will have more to say in the coming days to help restore accountability and trust in the debt and deficits of the government of Ontario that we inherited.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

1100

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Again to the President of the Treasury Board: Thank you, but I was looking for an answer about the date.

Given the time frame to conduct such a large-scale inquiry—headed by the former BC Premier, who we know is known for his cut-and-privatize agenda—and the fact that we already have an independent officer of the Legislature whose job it is to audit government finances, what does the government expect to learn from the report that it could not have learned from our Auditor General?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you to the member from Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas for the question. Our government has received the report of the Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry. We thank commission chair Gordon Campbell and members Michael Horgan and Dr. Al Rosen for their diligent work to examine the accounting practices of the previous government and meet the deadlines that we provided to them.

We are reviewing the report to ensure the implications of the recommendations are considered in full. We will release the report in its entirety to the public, as promised. The public will see the exact same report that we saw. We are committed to restoring accountability and trust in Ontario's finances.

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: My question is for the Deputy Premier. I'm not sure if the Deputy Premier knows, but in the city of Toronto there are 338 boards, agencies and commissions that require a city councillor to be able to conduct business. This includes standing committees, the 83 BIAs across the city, boards and agencies, as well as intergovernmental organizations like the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

The 25 elected councillors will be required to sit on those boards and fulfill those duties. Does the Deputy Premier think that 25 councillors will be able to conduct business in an accountable manner?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, through you, I want to thank the member for the question. The simple answer is yes.

Interjections.

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

Supplementary?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm very glad that the answer has been yes, but I am going to raise another question at this point.

If this is the case, let's talk about what's happening today. The board meeting for Exhibition Place that was scheduled for tomorrow has been cancelled because they don't have quorum; not enough city councillors are available. The ongoing labour dispute at Exhibition Place will not be dealt with and the lockout will now continue indefinitely. This will be the way, potentially, under Bill 5, that the city could operate.

My question is this: Is the government trying to shut down the voice of the people of Toronto?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, Speaker, through you to the member—

Interjection: Just say yes.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Steve Clark: Again I want to say, let's stop the political games. We had a decision this morning.

With Bill 5, our goal has always been to provide efficient and effective government for the citizens of Toronto. We have stated very clearly that we believe that the 25 elected MPs and 25 elected MPPs do a great job in representing those electoral boundaries, those constituencies—

Mr. Michael Coteau: Do it in your hometowns. One councillor per 6,000 people—

Hon. Steve Clark: Despite the shouts from the opposite benches, I think it was very clear. The Court of Appeal concluded, “There is a strong likelihood that application judge erred in law and that the Attorney General’s appeal to this court will succeed.”

Further, “The judgment under appeal was probably wrongly decided,” and “It is not in the public interest to permit the impending election to proceed on the basis of a dubious ruling that invalidates legislation”—

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

Next question.

TAXATION

Ms. Jill Dunlop: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. I listened with excitement to his earlier answer about families seeing relief at the pumps with the price of fuel going down through the efforts of our government. However, not all are as excited. After all, the opposition NDP campaigned on a promise to keep the cap-and-trade carbon tax. Many of them even suggested the price of gas was not high enough.

The NDP does not see high gas prices as a problem. In fact, they aspire to higher prices. In fact, the member for Ottawa Centre expressed his support through imposing a carbon tax that would increase the price of gas by 30 cents per litre. Since I can’t ask him his opinion, Speaker, my question is to the Minister of the Environment. What will he do to ensure members like that are never in a place to make these kinds of dangerous policy decisions?

Hon. Rod Phillips: I thank the member for Simcoe North for her question. I know she works very hard for her constituents, as all members do.

This government is going to keep its promises. That’s how it’s going to ensure that the kinds of policies that we ran on, the kinds of policies that Ontarians expect, like lower gas prices, are the policies that are preserved in Ontario.

This morning, when Ontarians woke up, when drivers were going to work and when they lined up because they saw gas was cheaper, that didn’t happen by accident. That happened because of a deliberate choice made by this government and by this Premier to make a reduction, by getting rid of the regressive, job-killing cap-and-trade program—

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It didn’t happen because of you. It happened because of a season change.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Windsor West, come to order.

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, as I’ve said, this is just the beginning. Natural gas prices will be dropping.

The value for an average family will be \$260 a year. The opposition may not think that that’s a lot of money, but let me tell you, it is a lot of money. We can expect to see continued money back in people’s pockets. We continue to see—

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

Supplementary?

Ms. Jill Dunlop: I’d like to thank the minister for his answer. Again to the Minister of the Environment: The opposition NDP aren’t the only ones who are upset by cheaper gas prices. The Trudeau Liberals also must not appreciate the fact that the people of Ontario are finally seeing how much carbon taxes are actually costing them. The threat of the federal Liberal carbon tax continues to hang over the heads of Ontario families and the federal government is hand in hand with the NDP in their support for higher gas prices. They both want you to pay more for gas and for everything else.

We promised we would fight the federal carbon tax with everything we’ve got. Can the Minister of the Environment update this House as to what he is doing to ensure these lower gas prices are here to stay?

Hon. Rod Phillips: The member is correct. Not only does the opposition want higher gas prices, but the federal Liberals have committed to imposing a carbon tax on Ontarians, a carbon tax that we ran against, a carbon tax that we said we would stand against.

Mr. Speaker, as I shared—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Transportation, come to order.

Hon. Rod Phillips: As I shared with the Legislature earlier this week, last Friday we filed a statement of particulars with the Court of Appeal, a statement of particulars that outlines why we see that federal carbon tax as unconstitutional. I’d ask the members opposite to consider whether they want to stand with us on behalf of Ontarians. Do they want to stand against the federal Liberals or continue their push for higher gas prices? Where do you stand?

CHILD CARE

Ms. Doly Begum: My question is to the Minister of Education. Congratulations on your portfolio. I look forward to working with you.

Last month, this Conservative government quietly eliminated the for-profit maximum threshold, which had limited provincial funding for corporate and for-profit child care operators. Now the Ford government has slashed almost \$23 million in funding that was supposed to go to low-income families to assist with child care costs.

In a memo sent to the child care stakeholders last month, the government stated that it had made these decisions “in response to feedback from partners.” Can the minister tell us exactly who they consulted before deciding to cut child care subsidies for low-income families? Who are these partners?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm very pleased to stand in this House today and say that we made a commitment to parents across Ontario. We promised to respect parents and we're delivering on that promise, because we had a previous administration that was choosing who and where parents had to take their children for daycare. In rural Ontario, in some instances, parents were having to drive 20 minutes out of their way to turn around and then head back to work. Speaker, it wasn't working.

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What we're doing as a PC government is listening to parents across all of Ontario and enabling them to make choices that fit their family and prove to be effective and efficient.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you for your response, but it's unfortunate and disappointing that, clearly, they didn't consult with any of the low-income families. Studies have shown that not-for-profit—

Interjections.

Ms. Doly Begum: Speaker, they may drown me with their distasteful, disgraceful ways, but they cannot drown the people of Ontario.

Studies have shown that not-for-profit child care offers higher standards of care and better wages for workers. This is why child care advocates have urged the province to expand not-for-profit child care spaces. We know that the biggest issue in the child care sector is the lack of affordable, high-quality, safe child care spaces.

By removing the for-profit threshold, this government is opening the doors to large chain providers. By cutting millions of dollars in assistance for low-income families, they are making child care less affordable for those who need it.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario needs to move forward, not backward. Can the minister tell us: Who did the minister cut a deal with in favour of corporate, for-profit child care providers?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Really and truly, what we're doing is expanding daycare choices across Ontario, and we're respecting parents and their need to have choice in how they manage their family. The nanny state of the previous administration was proven not to work. We're listening to parents across Ontario.

Again, I invite any member of the opposition to come out to my riding—out of the bubble of Toronto—and see how parents need choice. We cannot allow a continuation of parents to have to drive 25 kilometres out of their way just to turn around to get to work 40 kilometres from there. It's not efficient, it's not effective and it's not good for Ontario families.

I am very pleased to say that Premier Ford and the Ontario PC government is standing by parents, respecting parents, and we're giving them choice. That's what government should do.

NATURAL GAS

Ms. Donna Skelly: My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure. Minister, along with many of my colleagues, I can assure you that I had a fabulous time at the International Plowing Match, which was hosted in Chatham-Kent. And I would like to take the opportunity to thank the hundreds of volunteers who worked tirelessly to make it such a success.

Yesterday, the Premier's speech made reference to all that our government for the people is doing to assist small, rural and northern communities. Would the minister please elaborate on the legislation he will be introducing later today and how it will help people of rural Ontario?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much for that great question. I would first like to thank the member for her kind words of hospitality regarding her enjoyment at the International Plowing Match yesterday. I'm extremely grateful, as I said earlier today, for the opportunity to have showcased my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, the community of Pain Court in the municipality of Chatham-Kent, and to bring attention to the rural issues and the rural way of life of those families.

Mr. Speaker, later today I will be extremely honoured to introduce my first piece of legislation as the Minister of Infrastructure, entitled the Access to Natural Gas Act. This legislation will propose to facilitate the expansion of access to natural gas by working with the Ontario Energy Board to develop regulations to expand the private sector's participation in community projects.

Speaker, we told the people and businesses in rural and northern Ontario that we intend to expand natural gas. Ontario is open for business. We're going to lower energy costs. Promises made—

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

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Supplementary.

Ms. Donna Skelly: To the minister: Earlier this morning, you mentioned that this proposal will allow further expansion of natural gas, driven by the private sector. Given that the Access to Natural Gas Act proposes to enable further expansion of natural gas projects, driven by the private sector, I know that many of my colleagues and people from right across rural and northern communities are keen to hear more about how this program will impact the rural economy and agricultural competitiveness.

My question is this: How many communities will now be able to access natural gas and how does this program compare to the previous one?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: As the Premier mentioned at the plowing match, our new program will allow for 78 communities and 33,000 households to have access to reliable, cost-effective and clean natural gas, who previously were dependent on electric heat, propane oil and diesel to heat their homes. This will help to make life more affordable for many families and will help to reduce costs for new and existing businesses in Ontario, helping to fulfill a key commitment that our government has made to

the people of this province. For example, this program will help rural and agricultural communities by providing farmers with more opportunities to leverage modern technology to grow food and provide support for our booming greenhouse industry. This program will provide more communities with reliable access to clean natural gas in a cost-effective way to minimize the burden on the taxpayer.

While the previous Liberal government limited private sector innovation and efficiencies, our government will listen to the real experts, the people of Ontario, and partner with—

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

CHILD POVERTY

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: My question is for the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. Instead of talking about the issues that Ontarians expect their government to tackle, the Premier's top priority has been to interfere in Toronto's democratic elections. Why does the minister believe Toronto's municipal election is a more urgent priority than reducing child poverty, now that Toronto has become the child poverty capital of Canada?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I'm finally happy that this New Democratic Party is actually talking about something else other than a municipal election simply in the city of Toronto. The rest of us live in other places. There are lots of problems going on, and we're delighted that they finally joined us—to the party—right here in question period.

Let me tell you what we're going to do: One in seven Ontarians lives in poverty in the province of Ontario. We have been steadfast in our determination to change our social assistance programs so we can help people get out of poverty and lift them up and into jobs where they can, and give them more supports when they can't. But I can tell the member opposite that if she wants to actually help people, we have to build a compassionate society. That's the best social safety net. The best way that we can ensure that we have a social program is getting people a job.

But I am delighted, for once in the last couple of weeks, that this New Democratic Party is actually talking about something other than themselves.

Interjections.

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

Supplementary.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Back to the minister: Every day, poverty is deepening in Ontario. Toronto has become the child poverty capital of Canada. In some Toronto communities, over half of all children are living in poverty. Every year, between 90 and 120 of Ontario's most vulnerable children die while under the province's care. This is unacceptable. These are the issues Ontarians expect their government to deal with, but instead this government is taking up valuable time and resources to interfere in Toronto's municipal election. Minister, when

is the government going to start taking action on the issues—not just cutting social assistance; actually taking action on the issues that actually matter to Ontarians, rather than creating chaos?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: We took action on June 29, the minute we were appointed to the cabinet. I started immediately with briefings within my ministry to ensure that the one in seven people—not just in the city of Toronto. I know that for those members in Toronto, you think this is all about yourselves, but here's the situation: Right from Ottawa all the way to Kenora, we're standing up for the people who need our help the most, and those one in seven people who are being trapped in a system of abuse, a cycle that has kept them down—it's something that I couldn't stomach.

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That's why in the first few days of being minister, we put the pause on what the previous government was doing, but under compassionate grounds ensured that we had a 1.5% increase across the board on social assistance. We set a hundred-day target in order to put a new program in place, which will be unveiled on November 8.

But I will reiterate: It's nice to finally see the opposition take something more than just the city of Toronto politicians act to this floor so that we can actually start talking about the important issues of the day.

ENERGY RATES

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure. Minister, when I went door to door in my riding, one of the biggest concerns that I heard was the issue of skyrocketing hydro rates. The fact that people were forced to choose between heating and eating is a decision that no family or fixed-income senior should ever have to make.

I'm sure members on both sides of this House are keenly aware that for far too long, the previous Liberal government, supported by the NDP, when it came to the well-being of people in this province, especially when it came to energy poverty—there were municipalities that were forced to open up heat banks in the dead of winter, because no one could afford Ontario's hydro rates—the highest rates, I might say, in North America.

Minister, in light of this proposed new legislation that I'm looking forward to you bringing forward later today, can you please tell us how this program intends to lower the cost of heating for people across this great province?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to thank the member from Sarnia-Lambton for a great question. I know the member from Sarnia-Lambton has long advocated in this Legislature to expand natural gas right across rural and remote communities in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, one of our five priorities as a government for the people is lowering hydro bills for the people of this province, and that is exactly why we will achieve this through the Access to Natural Gas Act. Our proposed legislation will enable the private sector to work with local municipal partners to expand access to reliable, cost-

effective and clean natural gas for rural, northern and First Nations communities at no cost to the taxpayer. This means that 78 communities and 33,000 households will have the ability to access critical energy infrastructure in our great province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Back to the Minister of Infrastructure: That's great news, Minister, and I'm looking forward to the legislation later today. Following through on this new legislative commitment truly represents our government for the people's commitment to making promises and actually keeping them, a concept that is foreign to the former Liberal government. The expansion to 78 communities and more in rural and northern Ontario will greatly assist in providing much-needed energy and financial relief, as well as enabling our First Nations communities to access cleaner and cheaper energy options.

Minister, can you tell us how much money each household expects to save with this new legislation when it's passed?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Again to the member for Sarnia—Lambton, thanks for that question.

Mr. Speaker, our government understands that people are facing extremely high energy bills, especially if they have to depend on electricity, oil or propane to heat their homes. Having access to natural gas makes life more affordable and puts more money back in people's pockets. Estimates suggest that by switching to natural gas, residential customers and families can save between \$800 and \$2,500 per year. This new initiative, in conjunction with our government's commitment to scrap the cap-and-trade carbon tax, will help put more money in the pockets of families and help provide them with much-needed financial relief.

Our government is committed to the expansion of natural gas infrastructure and services in our province, unlike the previous Liberal government, who not only banned private-sector participation in expanding natural gas, but also tried to ban natural gas altogether in Ontario.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, let's not forget about the NDP and how they continuously advocated—

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

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is for the Deputy Premier. In August alone, Ontario lost over 80,000 jobs and there was a troubling increase, particularly, in youth unemployment. Ontario's youth unemployment rate increased last month and is persistently higher than anywhere else in the country. For young people in Niagara West, in Durham, in Waterloo, in Scarborough—this is incredibly alarming for youth in this province.

Instead, this government has spent a majority of their time really fixated on Toronto city council. Why does the Deputy Premier believe Toronto's municipal election is

more important than creating more jobs and opportunities for youth in this province?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: Once again, I want to thank the member for the question. It was very clear during the election that our government was committed to providing an efficient and effective level of government services. We talked about reducing the size and cost of government almost every day during the campaign. As well, we've put some of our promises into practice. As was stated by the president of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Finance, we commissioned the commission of inquiry. We began the line-by-line review.

But today was particularly important, because the decision today really validated what we wanted in terms of—

Interjections.

Hon. Steve Clark: —and that was to have an efficient and effective council for the citizens of Toronto. I'm pleased to talk more about that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Well, so far, the only people who are getting more work in this province are the lawyers fighting this government.

Now, young people in Ontario know that they can't count on this government for a fair wage of \$15 an hour—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Transportation, come to order.

Ms. Catherine Fife: —but since becoming government, there has been no action, no plan, no strategy to create more jobs and opportunity for youth. In fact, they seem very content to double down on precarious, part-time contract work, particularly for youth in this province.

The Premier has shown us all that his priorities are their priorities, but not the priorities of the people of this province, and that the government is not willing to use their time or resources to help young people in this province reach their potential. These are backward priorities. The people of this province, the youth of this province, deserve better.

When is this government going to take action to help our young people build a good life here in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, I want to thank the member for the question. I want to make it very clear about our government's priorities: Our Premier and our Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade are in Washington today to stand up for jobs. They're standing up for jobs in the steel industry, in automotive and in agriculture.

The Premier made it very clear yesterday at the International Plowing Match and Rural Expo that our government is committed to ensuring that jobs will be created. That's exactly why they're in Washington today, standing up for jobs, standing up for Ontario, working with the federal government. That's the difference between our government and New Democrats.

RURAL ONTARIO

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Yesterday, we got to attend the 101st International Plowing Match in Pain Court, located in the municipality of Chatham-Kent, alongside many of our colleagues in the Legislature. Under the previous government, rural Ontario was often ignored. Meeting with so many farming families yesterday was a breath of fresh air, and served as a reminder of the hard work done every day by farmers.

Mr. Speaker, through the minister: Can the minister highlight for us why taking the time to attend the International Plowing Match was so important for our members and for rural Ontario?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you to the member for the question and for his warm welcome to the riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington yesterday as we attended the plowing match.

I also want to thank each and every member who took the time to attend and listen to the concerns of our farmers at the International Plowing Match yesterday. As mentioned by the member, rural Ontario was often an afterthought for far too long under the previous government. By taking the time to meet with the farming families and people in rural Ontario yesterday, we got to see some of the hard work that farmers do every day to contribute to our economy. It's important for all MPPs to see the hard work and skill that goes into growing and providing the best quality food.

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Working with our government, farming communities will be able to prosper and industries and businesses will be open, ready to lead and create jobs again in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I want to thank the minister for that invaluable response. It was great to see so many friendly faces and to hear from so many people who are supporting our Premier and the actions of our government.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has mentioned before in this Legislature that our government is going to help ensure that rural Ontario, along with the rest of the province, is open for business.

Yesterday, the Premier announced that we're going to help rural Ontario by expanding access to natural gas. Can the minister tell us how natural gas expansion will help rural Ontario become more competitive and make life more affordable?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I thank the member for that important question on how we can make life more affordable for Ontarians. In order to be a leader of economic growth and job creation, businesses need to be competitive. Under the previous government, the private sector was stuck on the sidelines, ready to make investments and take the burden off of our taxpayers. By working with the private sector and expanding the ability to bring natural gas to rural and remote communities in Ontario, we will put more money in people's pockets by

reducing the cost of energy and bringing more jobs to the area.

Our government is committed to working with the private sector to bring this important change to rural Ontario and to make rural Ontario competitive once again.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Deputy Premier. The Premier, we understand, is en route to Washington. He has said he stands "shoulder to shoulder" with his federal counterparts on NAFTA renegotiations. However, Ontario still hasn't responded to the steel tariffs that were imposed on Canada in June. With thousands of jobs in Hamilton hanging in the balance, what instructions has the government given to ministry trade officials to respond to the steel and aluminum tariffs?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much for the question. Yes, our Premier and the Minister of Economic Development are in Washington today to speak with the federal negotiation team and to do whatever they can do to protect our number one priority, which is making sure that Ontario is open for business. That means protecting our jobs, creating new jobs, supporting businesses and increasing trade.

One thing that the Premier has noted on several occasions is that we're going to do our part to protect Ontario workers in the automotive, steel and agricultural sectors. We're going to stand up to that and we're not going to give up.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Miss Monique Taylor: Back to the Deputy Premier: On one hand, we have a Premier, distracted with his own grievances, who claims to stand "shoulder to shoulder" with the federal government in the current trade dispute. On the other hand, we have a Premier who, when asked, repeatedly has said that his support for the US President "wouldn't waver," and he supports him 100%. This is the same President who threatens Ontario's livelihood and the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of Ontarians dependent on steel and auto manufacturing.

Which Premier will we be seeing in Washington?

Hon. Christine Elliott: There has been no hesitation on the part of the Premier. He has said on many, many occasions that he stands shoulder to shoulder with Ontario workers and Ontario businesses. He's going to make the point strongly—along with the Minister of Economic Development—in Washington that we want to make sure that the automotive, steel and agricultural industries are supported. They are the backbone of our economy.

We need to stand up for them and make sure that the position of Ontario is understood in the United States. It isn't always understood that as tariffs are imposed by the United States on Ontario—they don't understand the negative effect it's going to have on businesses in the United States. There are up to nine million jobs in question in the United States. That is a legitimate role for the Premier and the Minister of Economic Development to

play, to say that it doesn't just go one way; it goes both ways. We need to protect Ontario jobs.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Orléans has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing concerning the reduction of municipal council.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order: the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Norman Miller: I'd like to welcome Parry Sound resident and my friend John Beauchage here to Queen's Park today, former chief of Wasauksing First Nation and also former grand chief of the Union of Ontario Indians. Please welcome John Beauchage.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Welcome to the Legislature.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

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

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I would like to correct my record. It's 388 boards and agencies in the city.

Also, I would like to recognize my page, who is here today. On a un bon petit page d'Orléans ici : Martin Leduc, du Collège catholique Mer Bleue. Je lui souhaite la bienvenue. Merci d'être avec nous, Martin.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order: the government House leader.

Hon. Todd Smith: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding a late show on northern Indigenous education.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion related to northern and Indigenous education. Agreed? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. Todd Smith: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 38(b), the parliamentary assistant for Indigenous affairs shall participate in place of the parliamentary assistant to the Premier.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader has moved that, notwithstanding standing order 38(b), the parliamentary assistant for Indigenous affairs shall participate in place of the parliamentary assistant to the Premier.

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

Motion agreed to.

VISITORS

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

Mr. Bill Walker: I would like to actually welcome all of the pages to Queen's Park who are here, but a special little shout-out to Victoria MacLeod-Varner, the daughter of MPP MacLeod and her husband, Joe.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Please be assured that we will be introducing the pages in the appropriate manner in due course, as well.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NIAGARA FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to rise today and talk about a moving event I went to last Tuesday. The event was the unveiling of a monument to our local Niagara Falls firefighters who lost their lives serving our community: fire chief John Shapton, captain Harvey Lewis, director of training Glen Bassett, firefighter Wayne Bench, platoon chief Harry Sorley, firefighter Charles Stroud, firefighter Timothy Hoday, firefighter David Weaver and Captain John Shuttler. These are the names of the heroes who paid the ultimate price to keep our communities safe, keep our families safe and keep our children safe. There are never enough words to say thank you, but we can do work together to make sure that those who came after them are fully protected.

Some of these heroes lost their lives many years after they joined the service, some through cancers and other illnesses that have become part of the job.

Mr. Speaker, I've been speaking up for working men and women my entire adult life, and there's one thing I believe in my core: No person should ever, ever have to go to work and worry about not coming home or getting an illness that cuts their life short.

We need to refocus our efforts on workers' health and safety. We need to make sure that every woman and man is as protected in the workplace as we possibly can allow. If they do contract a workplace illness, we need to make sure that the province is there to provide for them and their families.

These firefighters build our communities and keep us safe. As I said, we can never thank them enough, but we can all use our power as legislators to learn from these lessons and protect the future generations of workers.

Firefighters and their lost brothers and sisters will always be family.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. David Piccini: I'd like to highlight an event that happened in my riding on the 14th of September which I

think speaks volumes about our government's commitment to govern and consult with and for the people.

Last Friday, Northumberland–Peterborough South welcomed MPP and PA Michael Parsa and his team from the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. They came down as a part of our government's cross-province consultation to discuss how unnecessary government regulation piled on by the previous government has restricted businesses' ability to grow and innovate and made life wantonly more difficult for the business community across Ontario.

Our community really came together on this occasion, and over the course of the discussion, we had 36 businesses and community leaders gather at Venture13 in Cobourg, where they voiced their various concerns and provided excellent feedback. Their stories were truly remarkable.

Folks, the phrase "Open for Business" is not just a slogan; we are taking tangible steps to make this province more competitive and create the conditions for economic opportunity. But it starts with listening, and the round table was an important first step in listening to the needs of Ontario businesses so we can understand as a government what more we can do to improve Ontario's economy.

I'd like to thank MPP Michael Parsa for taking the time to come down, and extend a special thanks to Wendy Curtis, CEO of Venture13, and Paul Burnham, owner of Burnham Family Farms, for working with my office to put this great day on.

ELIZABETH KISHKON

Mr. Percy Hatfield: We lost a good friend down my way. Elizabeth Kishkon was a former mayor of Windsor, serving between 1983 and 1985. She was the first and so far the only woman to hold that office. She was born in Oshawa but lived in London, England, as a child during the war years, spending much of her time in air raid shelters.

As mayor, she wrote to the Queen in 1984, told her of her wartime experience and invited her to Windsor during her visit to Ontario that year. The Queen was impressed, and she and Prince Philip did indeed visit our fair city that summer.

Elizabeth Kishkon was a great lady and the right mayor for the time. She used to be a broadcaster with CBC Radio in Windsor and got into political life to fight against the proposed residential development on Peche Island.

She had a good sense of humour, a regal bearing and a trace of a British accent. She loved to visit our schools and speak to the kids. When she wore her chain of office, some of them asked if, indeed, she was the Queen.

When she left office, Elizabeth was awarded a doctor of laws degree from the University of Windsor and was appointed to Ontario's Human Rights Commission.

Just last year, our mayor and council named a park after Ms. Kishkon, and she was delighted with the gesture. It's just down the street from my home. I think of Elizabeth

every day that I drive past that large sign identifying Elizabeth Kishkon Park.

To her family, I say thank you for your mother's service to our community. She was a role model for generations to come.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mrs. Robin Martin: I rise today to draw the attention of the Legislature to the path of destruction left behind by Typhoon Mangkhut, a category 5 storm that tore through the Philippines, Hong Kong, Macau and south China earlier this week.

Many of the storm's most severe effects were felt in the Philippines, where the typhoon triggered massive landslides, floods and collapses of buildings and structures. At least 74 people are now confirmed dead, while dozens more remain missing and unaccounted for.

Eglinton–Lawrence is a diverse riding with a significant Filipino population. Many of my constituents have friends, family and loved ones who have been directly or indirectly affected by the typhoon.

As rescue and recovery operations continue, I would like to encourage my colleagues to join me in offering thoughts and prayers for the people impacted by Typhoon Mangkhut. I would also like to recognize and thank the great number of Canadian charities and non-governmental organizations that have mobilized their resources to help with rescue and recovery efforts following Typhoon Mangkhut. Your efforts have not gone unnoticed.

I remember that not too long ago, there was Typhoon Haiyan, which hit the Philippines as well. I spent a long time in the basement of Our Lady of the Assumption church, which is the Catholic centre of the Catholic Filipino church in Canada. We had a great time, even though it was a very difficult situation, packing up boxes for relief.

The Filipino community always manages to seem like a happy, contented community, but they have suffered quite a lot from typhoons.

OPIOID ABUSE

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I rise today to speak about the opioid crisis, which is killing more than three people across this province every day. In my area of Thunder Bay, the rate of opioid overdose is double the provincial average, with paramedics dealing with over 173 overdoses so far this year.

Community partners have come together to address this crisis. Local nurse practitioner Tannice Fletcher-Stackhouse, at NorWest Community Health Centres, says, "In the 20 years that I've been a nurse in" this community of "Thunder Bay, I've never seen a problem this bad."

Yet in the north, we are desperately underserved—no health services providing supervised consumption, and not enough treatment spots. The regional hospital emergency services are wholly inadequate.

Evidence shows that supervised consumption services save lives, help connect people to treatment, improve community safety and save public funds in the long run.

We urge the Minister of Health and this government to reverse their decision to put the planned overdose prevention site in Thunder Bay on hold. The community wants this site. Let it open. Give people the chance to connect with health and treatment services they so desperately need.

BATTLE OF BRITAIN

Mr. Doug Downey: I rise today to bring attention to the 78th anniversary of the Battle of Britain.

After the defeat of France in June 1940, the Germans attempted to dominate the skies over southern England. The German Luftwaffe had become the most formidable and largest air force in the world.

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Although outnumbered, the British had excellent planes. They also used radar, and they used outposts. They had people relaying information by radio. It was really the first time that they had deployed radar in this sort of forum. There were 1,000 observation posts. They made limited resources go a long ways.

Throughout the summer and autumn of 1940, the Royal Air Force, which included the Royal Canadian Air Force contingent—which is really why I'm speaking to this—hailed the words of the newly minted Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, when he said, “Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this island or lose the war.... Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for 1,000 years, men will still say, ‘This was their finest hour.’”

Nearly 3,000 men took part in this pivotal moment of the war, and 544 of them died. In addition to the 3,000 men, there were tens of thousands of volunteers assisting throughout the 1,000 observation posts. The German Luftwaffe was dealt a lethal blow from which it never fully recovered.

This past Sunday, I took part in an anniversary parade in Barrie and had the opportunity to chat with Major-General Rohmer, who took part in the liberation of France, Belgium and Holland, completing 135 operational missions, and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. I thanked the major-general for his part in making it possible for protecting the institutions like this Legislature that we stand in today.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. John Fraser: My mother had a stroke last Thursday. I want to thank all of my colleagues and the many others for their kind words and notes.

The good news is, Mom has graduated to the seventh floor and is recovering and getting ready for rehab.

Applause.

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, I have a few thanks, so I'll try to get through them here. I'd like to thank the manager

at Farm Boy and the woman who helped my sister Steph and Mom. I'd like to thank the paramedics who got my mom to the hospital quickly, and the whole team at the Civic campus of the Ottawa Hospital and at the Heart Institute. A special thanks to the neurology acute-care unit for their professional and compassionate care. They all should know that their combined efforts put my mom on the right path, and we're very grateful.

When a loved one is sick, nothing else matters—nothing. One of the most important reasons people send us here is to ensure that our publicly funded health care system will be there for us, and it was for us.

Speaker, there has been a lot of conflict in this House in the last couple of weeks. Being away and looking at this, it just reminded me that we must never lose our focus on what's most important to those people that we serve.

Again, thank you very much.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mme France Gélinas: Residents of Nickel Belt, Sudbury and communities beyond are concerned by the signals they are receiving from the Ford government in relation to the continued four-laning of Highway 69. Last week, the Sudbury Chamber of Commerce wrote to the Premier to express their concerns about the Premier's line-by-line audit and the possibility it will cancel funds already committed to finish the four-laning of Highway 69.

Speaker, Highway 69 is the connective artery between southern and northern Ontario. Commuters come south while businesspeople and tourists come north. Unfortunately, Highway 69 remains very dangerous. It was designed at a time when the majority of commercial and industrial freight were carried by rail. In 2018, most freight is carried by tractor-trailer in the name of speed and efficiency.

Unfortunately, that speed and efficiency is lost when something goes wrong on this stretch of highway. When something goes wrong, Speaker, it goes really wrong. The routine closures on Highway 69 due to collisions add hundreds of kilometres and several hours of detours, not to mention the tragic loss of life. Too many northern citizens have lost their lives on this two-lane stretch of road.

In Nickel Belt and Sudbury, everybody knows someone who has died or had an accident on Highway 69. To prevent further loss of life, we need to make sure that the money is there to finish the four-laning of Highway 69. The sooner, the better.

ENGINEERING GRADUATES

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Ontario's professional engineers are vital to the success of our province. They build our cities and infrastructure and make sure that what they build is built well and built safe.

Just last week, on September 13, I was honoured to be able to present final certificates to engineers from Oakville North–Burlington who are about to enter the profession in

Ontario. I had the pleasure to address the Oakville chapter of the Professional Engineers of Ontario, where engineers from my riding and neighbouring ridings in the Halton region received their certificates. And what a diverse bunch of new Ontario engineers—everyone from new graduates from our great universities to new immigrants to Canada receiving their Canadian credentials. I know that they will make a significant contribution to Ontario and its future, and I'm proud to be part of a government that will ensure that their future will be one of personal success and prosperity.

Under the leadership of our Premier, we will build an economy that will need the work of engineers like the ones I met last week. They can help us rebuild Ontario's crumbling infrastructure.

To each of the new professional engineers who received their certificates last week, congratulations. I wish you much success.

DRIVER EXAMINATION CENTRE

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: It was my pleasure to make an announcement on Monday morning on behalf of the Minister of Transportation, the Honourable John Yakabuski, on the opening of a brand new DriveTest centre in Mississauga.

Joined by my colleague the MPP for Mississauga—Erin Mills, I toured the facility, which will service over 300,000 customers annually and increase the capacity within our system. With 25 kiosks, accessible examination technology and tests available in over 25 languages, this new Mississauga location is now the largest DriveTest centre in Ontario, and has created about 40 new, full-time jobs.

We have also launched a new Ontario Drive app to help prepare new drivers for their G1 written test and improve accessibility overall.

Thank you to the staff for a warm and informative visit. Our government is excited to get Ontario moving.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Ms. Jane McKenna: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly pursuant to standing order 111(b).

I'll pass this over to page Alisha.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Ms. McKenna presents the committee's report. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Ms. Jane McKenna: No, thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 111(b), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ACCESS TO NATURAL GAS ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR L'ACCÈS AU GAZ NATUREL

Mr. McNaughton moved first reading of the following bill:

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

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Interjection: On division.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): On division.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Yes, I do, Mr. Speaker.

The Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998, is amended to provide rate protection for consumers or classes of consumers with respect to costs incurred by a gas distributor in making a qualifying investment for the purpose of providing access to a natural gas distribution system to those consumers. Gas distributors are entitled to be compensated for any resulting lost revenue, and all consumers, or such classes of consumers as are prescribed, are required to contribute toward the compensation.

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REA AND WALTER ACT (TRUSS AND LIGHTWEIGHT CONSTRUCTION IDENTIFICATION), 2018

LOI REA ET WALTER DE 2018 SUR L'IDENTIFICATION DES COMPOSANTS STRUCTURAUX À OSSATURE LÉGÈRE

Mr. Pettapiece moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 33, An Act governing the identification of truss and lightweight construction in buildings / Projet de loi 33, Loi régissant l'identification des composants structuraux à ossature légère incorporés aux bâtiments.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: This is also known as the Rea and Walter Act (Truss and Lightweight Construction Identification). It will save the lives of firefighters. This bill will require commercial and industrial buildings, as well as multi-family dwellings of three or more units other than a townhouse, using truss and/or lightweight construction to be marked by an identification emblem. This bill is the minimum standard our firefighters should expect.

I look forward to working with all my colleagues in the House and also all stakeholder groups.

PETITIONS

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Ms. Bhutila Karpache: This petition is titled “Stop Doug Ford from Interfering in Municipal Elections.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Doug Ford’s decision to reduce Toronto’s wards from 47 to 25 was made without any public consultation;

“Whereas Doug Ford’s meddling in municipal elections is an abuse of power;

“Whereas Doug Ford is cancelling democratic elections of some regional chairs;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately reverse Doug Ford’s unilateral decision to dismantle Toronto city hall and cancel regional chair elections; to maintain the existing Toronto municipal boundaries; and ensure that the provincial government does not interfere with the upcoming Toronto municipal election for Ford’s political gain.”

I will be signing the petition as well, and I will give it to page Josh.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Mike Schreiner: This is a petition from my constituents supporting the Basic Income Pilot.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I support this petition, will sign it and hand it to page Will to take to the Clerks’ table.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mme France Gélinas: I would like to thank Chantale Martin from Levack 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 as follows:

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

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

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Ms. Jill Andrew: The petition is entitled “Stop Doug Ford from Interfering in Municipal Elections.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Doug Ford’s decision to reduce Toronto’s wards from 47 to 25 was made without any public consultation;

“Whereas Doug Ford’s meddling in municipal elections is an abuse of power;

“Whereas Doug Ford is cancelling democratic elections of some regional chairs;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately reverse Doug Ford’s unilateral decision to dismantle Toronto city hall and cancel regional chair elections; to maintain the existing Toronto municipal boundaries; and ensure that the provincial government does not interfere with the upcoming Toronto municipal election for” Doug “Ford’s political gain.”

I proudly sign this—affix my signature—and hand it off to page Alisha.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Just a reminder for everyone in the Legislature: Regardless of whether it’s a petition or anything else that you may be reading, we refer to members in the House either by their riding, by their ministry title or, in the case if it’s the Premier, we refer to the individual as the Premier, not by first name.

Having said that, further petitions?

PHARMACARE

Mr. Joel Harden: I'd like to read a petition entitled "Universal Pharmacare for All Ontarians."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas prescription medications are a part of health care and people shouldn't have to empty their wallets or rack up credit card bills to get the medicines they need;

"Whereas over 2.2 million Ontarians don't have any prescription drug coverage and one in four Ontarians don't take their medications as prescribed because they cannot afford the cost;

"Whereas taking medications as prescribed can save lives and help people live better; and

"Whereas Canada urgently needs universal and comprehensive national pharmacare;

"We, the undersigned, express our support for a universal provincial pharmacare plan for all Ontarians."

Speaker, I support this petition. I will be signing it and I will be handing it to page Victoria for the Clerks.

CURRICULUM

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I would like to present a 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" the Premier "and the Conservative government is dragging Ontario backward, requiring students to learn an outdated sex ed curriculum that excludes information about consent, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexting, cyberbullying and safe and healthy relationships;

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

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and give it to page Katie to bring to the Clerks.

SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Catherine Fife: My petition is entitled "Ontario Needs to Fund Family-Created Housing."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government's 2014 budget included a commitment to address the wait-list of more than 12,000 adults with developmental disabilities awaiting residential funding, and some of whom have been waiting more than 20 years; and

"Whereas since the spring of 2014 the number of adults with developmental disabilities awaiting residential funding has grown to more than 14,000; and

"Whereas there is currently no available funding to plan for a respectful transition from the family home to a home of choice in the community; and

"Whereas more than 1,450 Ontario parents over the age of 70 continue to provide primary care to their adult child; and

"Whereas currently adults with developmental disability must go on the crisis list before they receive residential funding, often resulting in a loss of choice, dignity and community; and

"Whereas family-created housing prioritizes dignity, choice and community inclusion for the resident living with disability as well as providing long-term cost savings for the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Minister of Community and Social Services to address the growing wait-list for adults with developmental disabilities awaiting residential funding and provide stable funding opportunities for family-created housing."

It's my pleasure to affix my signature and give this petition to page Victoria.

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: I'd like to thank Aidan, Alicia and David from the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups for this petition. This is titled "Workers' Comp Is a Right."

"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 too believe that workers’ compensation is a right, and will be affixing my signature to it.

SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

M^{me} Laura Mae Lindo: Ma pétition s’appelle « Temps pour les soins ».

« À l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Attendu que des soins de qualité pour les 78 000 résidents des maisons de SLD est une priorité pour les familles de l’Ontario; et

« Attendu que le gouvernement provincial ne fournit pas un financement adéquat pour assurer un niveau de soins et de personnel dans les foyers de SLD afin de répondre à l’augmentation de l’acuité des résidents et du nombre croissant de résidents ayant des comportements complexes; et

« Attendu que plusieurs enquêtes du coroner de l’Ontario sur les décès dans les maisons de SLD ont recommandé une augmentation des soins pour les résidents et des niveaux du personnel. Les études des normes minimales de soins recommandent 4,1 heures de soins directs par jour;

« Nous, soussignés, pétitionnons l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario de :

« Modifier la Loi sur les foyers de SLD (2007) pour un minimum de quatre heures par résident par jour, ajusté pour le niveau d’acuité et la répartition des cas. »

I don’t know to say, “I fully support the petition.” I will sign my name to it and give it to page Josh.

Le Vice-Président (M. Rick Nicholls): C’est bon. Merci.

Further petitions?

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: This petition is titled “Don’t Take Away Our \$15 Minimum Wage and Fairer Labour Laws.”

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

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

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

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

“Raised the adult general minimum wage to \$14 per hour and further raises it to a \$15 minimum wage on

January 1, 2019, with annual adjustments by Ontario’s consumer price index;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I fully endorse this petition and will be signing my name to it as well.

CURRICULUM

M^{me} France Gélinas: I’m proud to read this petition from the member of the United Church of Toronto and my good friend Rev. Cheri DiNovo:

“Whereas for six years the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) listened to thousands of former students of residential schools and their families testify to the devastating legacy of this national policy of assimilation;

“Whereas the TRC called upon ‘the federal, provincial and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with survivors, Aboriginal peoples and educators, to make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, treaties and Aboriginal peoples’ historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for kindergarten to grade 12 students’ (CA62.i);

“Whereas on July 15, 2015, Canada’s Premiers indicated their support for all 94 Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action and said they would act on them in their own provinces and territories;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario urge the government of Ontario to fully implement such a curriculum for kindergarten through grade 12; and

“Whereas, in 2017, the government of Ontario had taken first steps to fulfill this action with a planned completion date of fall 2018...;”

“That the Ontario Ministry of Education immediately complete and implement the comprehensive revision of

history, social studies, civics and other curriculum for kindergarten through grade 12 to fulfill the goals cited in call to action 62.i from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it, et je vais demander au page M. Simon de l'amener à la table des greffiers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Merci. The time for petitions has now expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STANDING ORDERS

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 13, 2018, on the motion regarding amendments to the standing orders.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to be part of this debate today. I want to acknowledge the person to my immediate right, the House leader, the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, and the proud member—three terms now—from the Bay of Quinte. He has done an exceptional job. Some might suggest that he might be the best House leader in the history of this Parliament. I would go as far as to say he's the best House leader in this session of the Parliament. I think he'll continue that trend for many, many months and years to come.

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It's truly an honour to be here. I just want to say that one of the things I think he does bring is a practicality to the job. He wants to ensure that every moment we're in this Legislature, we're debating and we're talking about the things that are important to the people all across our great province. Yes, we all have a first responsibility to represent the great ridings we're given the privilege to represent, but we also have that other reality that we're also governing on behalf of all Ontarians. After all, we've heard in here numerous times in the last little while that we are here for the people.

We want to ensure that there's ample time to debate. I'm going to go through a lot of detail in my 20 minutes, but the overarching theme is that we want to make sure that we're updating the standing orders to bring 40 more hours of debate on government bills. I can't imagine that anybody in any of the other parties is going to object to having more debate. That's what democracy is all about; that's what this very important House, this Legislature, is for, to ensure that the voices of the people are spoken. And we've had a lot of debate over the last week and a half or two weeks in regard to democracy and what that truly means.

This order to bring 40 more hours is the equivalent of about three weeks of House time to actually talk about whatever that important government bill is. I know, particularly with this House leader, that we're going to be bringing bills that are going to have a positive impact on

the people of Ontario. He has looked at things like amending the standing orders to allow independent members to make statements on government policy, which is not allowed under the current standing orders.

This was a change government, Mr. Speaker. This election made a lot of changes in here. There are people who have never been here: the member from the Green Party, the first one ever. I jokingly—

Hon. Todd Smith: I know he's going to support this.

Mr. Bill Walker: He's going to, I think. He can set his record now for 100% support for the government, like he has for the opposition, if he just votes for this bill.

I jokingly said to the member respectfully yesterday in the lobby that, with the night sittings and some of these new things that have happened, none of this ever happened before a member of the Green Party was here. But we know that he's here to do the right thing with all of us, and he's a good addition—and of course our seven independent Liberal members as well. So we wanted to make sure, and I believe the Speaker of the day also wanted to make sure, that they had a proportional ability, and our House leader brought this. I think that speaks well of him and it speaks well of our government, to ensure people have that ability to stand in this House and debate, as we're sent here to do.

There was a really significant one: a 31-minute gap between private members' business. I know one of our colleagues certainly had a discussion with the House leader when that happened because she felt it was 31 minutes of wasted time that we could have had in here to debate topics, to bring the issues of our ridings to the table. It was truly just a thing with the change of how the parties are structured now. That old standing order worked for years and years, but now it doesn't. So we're going to clean that up and ensure that we actually have the ability to do that.

I want to make sure—at the end of the day, I believe the spirit and the intent of the House leader, the Minister of Government and Consumer Services and the great member for the Bay of Quinte, who brought these forward, is to make sure we are efficient, that we're using every moment in this Legislature to be doing what we're sent here to do, and that's to debate and to come up with and form the laws of government for the great province of Ontario.

Mr. Smith brought the government notice. I'm just going to read it here:

“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."

I think you said that twice.

Hon. Todd Smith: I did that. That is exactly what I did; you're right.

Mr. Bill Walker: I wanted to have it exactly how you did it because that was a command performance.

It is truly an honour to follow my colleague and a good friend of mine, again, the House leader, the Minister of Government and Consumer Services and the esteemed member from Bay of Quinte. You know, he referenced in his remarks that "over the course of the entirety of this Parliament—now in only its" seventh "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."

Again, he took a look at these standing orders and said, "How can we make this better? How can we make this a better Legislature for all of the people we're here to serve?"

We saw a number of reasoned amendments, and that certainly is the right and the privilege of the official opposition. Both he and I and a number of colleagues sat in that opposition for seven years, so we were very entrenched in understanding how the standing orders work and what they mean and how we should be able to utilize them to perform that role—and that is the role and the duty, to hold the government to account. There are certain tools at their disposal. What we want to ensure is that we have the ability to also represent the people of Ontario, and that may happen through the 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. 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.

I think when my colleague the government House leader, the Minister of Government and Consumer Services—the great, great member for Bay of Quinte—was looking at this, he even used the words that he doesn'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. What happened a week and a half later? Look at the obstruction and the delays we had. So I think it's very pertinent that we're talking about changes to the standing orders to ensure that we actually always respect the ability of the official opposition but that we also keep an orderly House and that we keep moving forward with legislation.

We want to ensure the House must have the ability to do its work, and that work is to pass legislation, to create the laws that govern this great province. We've had a lot of discussion over that in the last week and a half. We want to ensure that we uphold what has always been intended: that the democratically elected people are the people—

Ms. Catherine Fife: For the people.

Mr. Bill Walker: That's right, member from Kitchener: for the people. We just want you to start helping to govern for the people. We would love to have you say something positive for us and to come across and help us.

Hon. Todd Smith: She's going to support the natural gas bill; I know she is.

Mr. Bill Walker: I would think she'll support the natural gas bill, but you never know. Sometimes it's no, no, no and more no before we even get the sentence out. But at the end of the day, I like that she's engaged. I just wish it was a little more positive and, like her leader, I wish she'd come across every now and again with some positive thoughts.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd just like to—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please. I'd just like to remind the member what we are debating here and that you continue along that path as opposed to the path that you are headed down. Please continue.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and through you to other members of the House: What I was trying to move—and maybe I did wobble a little bit down a different path, but I'll try to bring it back. This House must have the ability to do its work, and that work is to pass legislation. That's the fundamental job of an elected official: to create the laws for our great province.

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 our caucus colleagues, many of them the new members of this House, who like to work. They want to be here. We have members on both sides; I'm trying not to say "those across the aisle" because we have a lot of great members. We have so many people elected this time, we had to put some on the opposition side because we didn't have enough seats. We have a lot—

Interjections.

Mr. Bill Walker: They are great members. I hope you listen to some of our members on that—through you, Speaker: I hope the member from Kitchener will actually

listen to some of our esteemed members on that side and she'll find a way to work with the government, not just being obstinate.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of that reaction. They came here and they want to work. They're prepared to roll up their sleeves and do what's needed for the benefit of those people they are given the privilege to represent.

We want to make sure that, at the end of the day, we have not an unprecedented level of obstruction in this House; we want to make sure the House has more time to debate, not less. We want to bring more hours—I believe it's going to work out to 40 more hours per session, which is equivalent to three weeks of debate time. It was also to ensure this 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 all of us, Mr. Speaker.

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One of the three members in this place, the official government House leader, the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, the esteemed, very talented member from Bay of Quinte—he is one of those three members in this place who has 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, the government House leader, Mr. Smith, takes this role as the guardian of this House's rights very seriously. I can attest to that. Every day, he is here with conviction to ensure that we're doing the right thing on behalf of all Ontarians. That's why, when he and members of our team 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. As I say, now that we have independent members and a fourth party here that we didn't have in my first seven years, there's a lot of things in the standing orders that have worked for long, long, many years that had to change, and we wanted to ensure that we had that.

We won't be able to deal with all of the contradictions and conflicts in the existing standing orders because it's a pretty comprehensive and significant list. What we've done is picked through and made sure that ones that we felt were pertinent today and are going to provide value are the ones.

We were able to deal with the one where the House had experienced the greatest disruption to this point, which is the conflict caused by two different standing orders in the section which deals with private members' business. As we all know, private members' business is that opportunity for every single one of us to bring an issue to this House of what we believe is important, particularly in our ridings—it could be across the province, but typically it's one for our own riding. There's nothing to do with party; there's nothing to do with anyone. It's one that we believe in, and it's one of the things that I think we're all proud to bring. We think long and hard, and many of us over the

years have tried—the challenge of how you get down to one. There's lots of those types of things that you want to bring.

I'll pay homage to my colleague from Sarnia-Lambton, Bob Bailey. Mr. Bob Bailey, I believe, has had five bills pass, and a number of those he's done in concert with other parties.

Hon. Todd Smith: He's the king of the PMB.

Mr. Bill Walker: He is the king of the PMB. We also call him "Grandpa Bobby." So he does that very well. He brings really important pieces of legislation that are going to impact all of us, as we all do.

Hon. Todd Smith: And he always calls before he digs.

Mr. Bill Walker: He always calls before he digs. You are very correct there, Mr. Smith.

We wanted to ensure that the time is spent being able to get as much time to debate those issues as possible. As I say, there was a 31-minute delay, where we had to actually recess the House, in which nothing was going on inside the Legislature, so we felt that that should be changed.

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 this House and independents. As a result, we had that 31-minute suspension in the middle of Thursday afternoons, during which the House can neither debate nor divide on 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 these 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 member's bill or a 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 Minister Smith, the House leader and the member from Bay of Quinte, has stated previously, there are other conflicts and contradictions in the standing orders, and I look forward to seeing the House's guidance and that of all of our fellow House officers to ensure that they're dealt with in a timely and fair manner.

Mr. Speaker, I should say just before I move on to the rest of my remarks that I also want to acknowledge the

Clerks' table. They give us significant talent and value in all of the thought processes we have. They're always there to consult and give us a very fair and unbiased representation of what the standing orders were intended to do and what's going to be best for the people, and I truly want to acknowledge all of the service that they give us every day.

Hon. Todd Smith: We'd be lost without them.

Mr. Bill Walker: We would be—I certainly would be lost without them, as you know and as they know.

Similarly, as the House leader's 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 the start which is traditional on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 3 p.m. to 1 p.m. on those days. We are 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, as both the House leader and myself have, on that 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 that 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 when 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 a motion 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 not so long ago. All this does is to offer similar treatment to time allocation motions as the standing orders already extend to private members' business.

Can I have one more water, please?

I want to make sure we engage these new pages who just came in today, and I want to welcome all of them, Mr. Speaker. I won't do them by name, because that would take too much time, but I just want to say thank you for all of your service, and we look forward to working with you. Just remember: We're here to create a province that you're

going to be proud to inherit and become the leaders of—our great community and our province.

It's worth noting that in both cases these debates have distinct standing orders which give 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 the 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.

Mr. Speaker, I again note that my colleague, when he was drafting this—one of the key pieces of this, beyond the PMB changes, is ensuring—I want to make sure that people do understand that he and our government have brought forth changes to these standing orders to allow the independent members to have a voice in this Legislature, to represent the people they've been sent here by. That is the democratic process. But he's also suggesting that we're going to add 40 hours of debate in each session. That's the equivalent of three extra weeks of debate. That is ensuring that we have openness, that we actually represent the people, that we're transparent and that we give full time for all members of this House to do what we want to do and are governed to do. All of us take that responsibility very seriously, because when you're elected you take on a great responsibility to represent the views of your people.

"For the people" is what we as our government stand for, Mr. Speaker. It's that voice that we're bringing to the table. Everything we put through the filter is: "How are we going to improve the lives of Ontarians? What are we going to do today, collectively?" Again, I reach out to the members of the opposition and to those independents to work with the government to ensure that the decisions that are made, the rules that we're creating and the laws that we're creating in this House, are for the benefit of the people. Yes, you have a job as opposition to challenge the government, to hold us accountable, but I say again, especially to the Leader of the Opposition: Please reach out. Please try to work with us and actually extend ideas and thought processes that are going to be of benefit.

I believe that these changes to the standing orders are going to be significant. They're going to allow the optimum amount of time to debate in this House, and I certainly look forward to all members supporting this when it comes to a vote at the end of the day.

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

Mr. Ian Arthur: I've struggled to find the words to describe standing to give my inaugural speech today: honour, but privilege, too, in its many forms. It is humbling, certainly. That I must speak while the Constitution I believe

in so much is being attacked weighs heavy on my mind. It is in this period of uncertainty, this era of the concentration of power, that I rise. While I would rail against the abuse of this power, I must also express my gratitude to those who brought me here, for without them I would not be here to fight this injustice in person.

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Thank you to my mother and father for the privileged life I have led, for a childhood on a farm, for their values, lessons, guidance and inspiration. To Brendan and Melanie, one could not have wished for siblings more amazing than you. Like many here, my family goes so much further: cousins, aunts, uncles, as well as adopted families who have done so much for me along the way. Today is a tribute to all of you. I truly thank you.

Thank you to Kingston and the Islands for placing your faith in me to represent you, to fight for you, to work for you and with you, to learn from you and to share in our collective experience. My promises to do this and more have not left my mind. I am here for you and because of you.

Kingston and the Islands is so much more than its boundaries or population. There is so much that deserves recognition: the very real and the intangible, our past and our future. It is Canada's first capital and the home of Sir John A. Macdonald, who is celebrated throughout my city; a name etched on so many plaques on our limestone walls, inscriptions celebrating Confederation and the railway that brought together the lands we now call Canada.

But while we leap to display and discuss these accomplishments, we must face the other legacy: Kingston, my home, is on the lands of the Wyandot, the Haudenosaunee and the Anishnawbe. Its name is Cataraqui, and its history began so long before it was the capital of our country. It is a land that belongs to a people who I believe have the right to be part of every speech from the throne.

As representatives of all the people of Ontario, it is our responsibility to consider the whole of history, both of this province and of this nation, and we must understand that ours is a colonial legacy. The legacy of Macdonald is one of uniting a country, but it is also one of treaties signed and broken, of the intentional starvation of entire peoples and of an institutionalized racism that has shaded our country to this day. His government approved the first residential schools, those places that today are our national shame, their sole purpose the stripping of culture and identity.

As we endeavour to build a better Ontario, we can only do so by understanding this complexity of our past. Of these lessons, one remains so prominent: Those in positions of influence must be ever vigilant of how they use their power.

Today, Kingston is a city finding its balance between this colonial past and the promise of our future. When one visits Kingston, one cannot help but notice how, among this framework of an old capital, is a new city with a thriving and vibrant culture. We certainly punch above our weight.

There are so many noteworthy organizations and community contributors that make it a richer place to live. At the Kingston WritersFest you can meet and listen to world-class authors; or there is the Loving Spoonful, a charity that works tirelessly to promote access to healthy food; or Switch Kingston, a green energy networking group that, against all odds, is still pursuing an energy transformation in Ontario.

My little town is full of passionate people dedicating time to causes they care about. It is this spirit of caring that helps make Kingston the special place that it is. The riding is home to incredible farmers and makers who sell their goods at the oldest continuous farmers' market in Canada. On that same market square each winter is hosted the Carr-Harris Cup, Canada's longest-running annual hockey game, between Queen's University and the Royal Military College. We have produced hockey players too numerous to count.

It is a riding filled with music. Each summer we have the Wolfe Island Music Festival, where there is a good chance of hearing Canada's next big musicians. We are the town of Gord Downie and the Tragically Hip and, more recently, the Glorious Sons.

It is a town where you might once have found Leonard Cohen visiting his friend Zal Yanovsky of the Lovin' Spoonful. The two of them could be found sharing a drink on the patio of a little restaurant that Zal started called Chez Piggy.

If music be the food of love, play on, and oh, how I have played. Stepping into the kitchen at Chez Piggy, where I had the honour to be the chef, always felt like coming home. That little restaurant tucked in a picturesque courtyard has been part of my life since I was a toddler. My mum served there when I could barely walk. When my parents had their organic market garden, the Pig became a steady customer. I'd help with deliveries up the back stairs and go to New Year's Day parties at Zal's place, which now belongs to his daughter, Zoe Yanovsky, who as my boss and friend has played such a significant role in my life.

Though it is a restaurant that I have known for so long, Chez Piggy always excites and inspires. Working with the demonstrable talent of chefs such as Matt Allen, Reyna Belsham, Richard Nicholas, Mitch Wheeler and Paige Guilan was a daily pleasure.

I look forward to hosting all of you in Kingston and taking you to that little restaurant that I love so much.

I've been asked many times now how a chef ended up running for office. To me, the answer is so simple: Food is the universal unifier. It brings us together and is an indicator of so much more in our society: of culture, love and connection, but also of poverty and its disastrous outcomes. Food is intertwined with health, with financial resilience and with childhood development.

What and how we eat touches on nearly every aspect of our lives, including the myriad of faiths that we practise. So many mornings in this chamber is echoed Matthew 6:11: "Give us this day our daily bread." We fast, we feast, we break bread. It is over food that we can find the commonality of the human spirit.

Significantly though, food is also an indicator of climate change. Recent summers have seen Ontario's worst drought followed by one of the wettest springs in recorded history. These extremes damaged the soil used to grow our food.

It is always the farmers who first feel the effects of these extremes—farmers such as Dianne Dowling from Howe Island, who had to go all the way to Cornwall to buy hay to keep her dairy heard alive during the drought. The scarcity of supply and the distance that she had to travel significantly increased her operating costs. She said to me, “Every day, I wake up and I wonder if the weather will change for the better or continue for the worse.”

These difficulties in farming and supplying food will be felt in our pocketbooks. Extreme weather will continue to inhibit our ability to raise crops, to supply food and to have affordable sustenance for the people of Ontario. While we debate how to move forward, farmers struggle, forests burn and homes flood.

I cannot help but think of how this generation is inheriting a world that is burning. I urge you to use your power to fight climate change, for the consequences of failing to take immediate action are catastrophic. I am fearful that enough will not be done, that it will fall to my generation to move from your course of history. I fear that it will fall on us to acknowledge that it is no longer enough to ask what one may do for their country, but instead what one must do for their planet. The reality is that we will have to do this with less, that we will have to accomplish this global feat with an unprecedented level of fiscal ingenuity.

I am part of the oft-maligned millennial generation, but it feels as though the money we earn takes us a little less through life than it once did. As someone whom Iliza Shlesinger termed an “elder millennial,” I have been fortunate to be a homeowner and to have repaid my student loans, but I have spoken to too many people who are unable to save any money, who are struggling to get by, young couples who know that they have been priced out of ever owning a home.

We are a generation that will simply earn less and one where a decade of debt is the reality of higher education. But that education is so critical. It is the ladder to success and the key to achieving social and economic mobility. It is essential for competition within the labour market and it is where the prosperity of future generations is found.

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In Kingston and the Islands, only 37% of the population has completed programs for a certificate, diploma or degree. Our educational institutions in the city include Queen’s University, the Royal Military College and St. Lawrence College. Each of these places is at the forefront of so many areas, growing our next leaders, thinkers and innovators—so many of whom are handcuffed by debt at graduation.

For both universities and colleges, the funding formula requires an extensive overhaul. In 2017, St. Lawrence College did not receive enough government funds to cover its expenses. They, like many other colleges, have introduced international programs and partnerships to assist in

filling these gaps. We must be careful about funding in this manner, as it will soon leave education inaccessible to too many.

Instead, we must foster an environment that is supportive of education, of innovation, one where dedication and ingenuity are paramount, one that will allow recent graduates to flourish instead of being further encumbered by debt. It is this debt, paired with low wages and the ever-increasing precarity of employment that is leading to the ever-increasing income inequality in Ontario.

Ultimately, as those governing this province, it is our duty to create policy that negates both the outcomes of inequality and inequality itself. Be cautious to not be the government of the few, for the few, for we are here to help the many and we must do so with intelligence, dignity and compassion. I urge this government to pursue the big ideas, such as basic income, such as meaningful action on climate change, such as reconciliation.

It is too easy to say no, to remove what is already there, but for this province to excel, those who lead must also be those who build. You have spent your time so far cutting this province down: gutting curriculums, erasing progress against climate change, undermining our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Tell me, what is this government building? I fear that I already know the answer and I repeat: a government not just of the few, but for the few.

What, dare I ask, will be left? You spend your time blaming the woes of this province on the previous Liberal government, but these are now your problems, regardless of where they came from. What are you building in health care? What inclusive curriculum are you writing? How will you build up the institution of government in a manner that wins the faith of Ontarians?

Hon. Todd Smith: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me.

I recognize the Minister of Government and Consumer Services on a point of order.

Hon. Todd Smith: I realize that the member opposite indicated that he was doing his maiden and inaugural speech. We obviously give him a lot of latitude to thank people in Kingston and the Islands and tell a little bit of history about the area where he comes from. But now he’s weaving off of the usual territory for a maiden speech and is not addressing the motion that we’re debating here this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I’ve been listening intently to the member and recognize the fact that it is his maiden speech.

I will allow you to continue. Kind of, maybe, tighten it just a little.

Interjection: Talk about the Frontenacs.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Talk about the Frontenacs.

I believe that my future economic prosperity and that of my generation will be based on what we do to foster the green economy. If we begin to lead the world, if I help begin to lead the world in an environmental transformation, we will begin to attract and construct those businesses of tomorrow.

I worry that this government has instead ground the green economy in Ontario to a halt. It is something that I am incredibly passionate about and that I want to see flourish. I want to see growth in those jobs continue to exist. Instead, I have seen the breaking of contracts, a government that is willing to throw democratic governance into jeopardy for the benefit of a few.

I have spent most of my working life helping run a small business, a business in an industry where margins are 1% to 3%, where a wet summer and a closed patio can ruin any chance of profitability. But we always made things work, including the increase in minimum wage. I spent a significant part of my working career earning a wage that I could barely live on, and it is this lived experience that makes me support a \$15 minimum wage now. We cannot abandon this movement towards a living wage. Too many continue to live in poverty despite working full time and often more than one job. But we must transition to this wage in a manner that does support business; that works with the businesses to ensure that those shops, cafés, services and stores can continue to be the backbone of our economy.

It is for us in this chamber to lead. We must lead. We must be proactive, and not reactive. But in my heart, I know that it is up to us here in the opposition to do this. It will be us who unite Ontarians in community and caring. I know that we in the opposition believe that what happens to our neighbours, to farmers or First Nations, to retirees, to new immigrants, to our communities—to my community—matters. It matters to me, and it matters to everyone here.

If people must take second jobs because wages are too low, and if seniors must make coffee or flip burgers because they cannot afford retirement, as I have heard stories of so many times, we care, even while we have good jobs of our own.

And if we continue to pass climate threshold after threshold, if the farmers that I bought from cannot grow their food because of drought, if our neighbours lose their homes because of fires and floods, and if my generation's children cannot play outside because of pollution, we must care.

If the people that I used to work with cannot have equal wages, if they cannot have equal pay for equal work, and if we cannot even go to that work without the fear of the abuse of power, then I know we do not live in a just society. And we will be there to believe, to support and to change.

But I worry: How can we expect to diverge from this paradigm if children must go to school and not be taught that consent is the most important lesson, not be taught that who they are is okay from the moment they are born, and not be taught how to deal with bullying in any form? We must care, even while we ourselves are through that part of our journey.

And if people must have their individual rights violated, we care. If the government of the day must circumvent the judiciary to accomplish an agenda, then we must stand

strong and defend those very rights and freedoms that make me so proud to be Canadian.

And where we see, on either side of the aisle, anyone going against principles, we must pursue ideals that are not detrimental to the lives of Ontarians.

Which brings me back to family: It has been so incredible to meet this New Democratic caucus. We are part of a newly formed family, united in a set of values and dreams for an Ontario that is better for everyone. Your talents are remarkable and inspirational, and when I speak of the honour that it is to stand here today, it is compounded by you. We act as a diverse mirror for this vast province. And when I have time for quiet thoughts, usually in bed after a busy day, I cannot help but think of how lucky I am to share this time and space.

My friends, we must undertake inspiring a new—rather, our—generation. We are tasked with gathering those on the periphery of the political system and bringing them to its centre, for we must begin to really define the relationship of government to people.

We must take this legacy of racism, of deficits and debt, of the 1% and of environmental folly, and we must lead.

Perhaps because of, or perhaps despite, these circumstances, we will lead. We will be the generation of hope and optimism and a pragmatic realism that I believe will serve us well as we face these challenges that do not allow us to think small.

We will lead a movement that spans income level, gender, generations and race, a movement that inspires. For it is only when we treat each other and the planet with compassion, respect and patience that we all thrive.

Together, in the face of this status quo, in the face of a government built upon cynicism and the pursuit of power for the few, we must remember that the future of our province is of our choosing and our measure must be how we care for those who are less fortunate.

I am here today because of those words of love and hope and optimism—

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

Further debate?

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Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Please be seated.

Further debate? I recognize the member from Ajax–Whitby.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Speaker, and good afternoon to you. I am pleased to join this afternoon's debate on the government's motion regarding the standing orders.

Speaker, I'll take you back to election night. What's clear there is that Ontario residents sent us here with a strong mandate to get the job done. In order to do that, the House must run more efficiently.

Turning to the first item in the motion, it deals with night sittings. When you read the motion, the rationale is pretty simple. It has only been until recently that this House sat very little after 6 o'clock in the evening. You'll know that from your long and varied experience here. 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. Concessions around night sittings were only recently made, and this motion does not reverse the vast majority of those changes; it doesn't. 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 it 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. What's clear is that 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. Speaker, I'm sure you would agree. 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 comes from a number of the caucus colleagues on this side of the House who like to work. 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 be sure that we were debating extensions of the House's existing practices or conventions, or dealing with the 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 has 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.

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, Speaker, 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. You've been a party to that. We want 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 member's bill or motion because the time allocated to the individual members 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 to maintain equal treatment for each of the caucuses.

As you know, we're here for the duration of 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 with you—which was an honour, of course—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's 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.

I'd like to turn now to 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. I draw your attention, Speaker, to standing order 46(a), which 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 earlier this week. 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.

You'll recall, Speaker, that twice in the summer session the government invoked time allocation, and in both cases the 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've been 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.

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 could 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 leader.

1630

Speaker, 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 for the ability to be flexible, and gives further consideration to orders of debate before the House.

But I want to point out, Speaker, that flexibility is necessary for the House. This motion doesn't address reasoned amendments because of that, because it's a tool that's at their disposal. I know we were accused from time to time of using it, earlier, in a debate, but we rarely used reasoned amendments, if at all.

What this motion does, Speaker, is provide the House with greater flexibility to find the time to debate questions before it, because that's what we were all sent here to do, as you well know. Instead of avoiding debate, or questions before it, we actually want the debate more, and I think that's a good thing. We want to have the opportunity to hear those different voices in the Legislature.

Speaker, we have 75 members of the Ontario PC government, we have 40 members of the Ontario New Democratic Party, and 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.

Now, within that context, 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. 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. What we're doing in this motion, Speaker, what we're encouraging here, is more debate in the Legislature. As a matter of fact, what we're proposing in this particular motion adds an additional 40 hours of debate per session in the Legislature. It actually proposes an additional three weeks of debate per session in this House.

Speaker, I want to underscore: What we're proposing in this motion is a greater opportunity for the opposition to voice their opposition to what the government is doing. As to whether they choose to do that or not is another thing. That's their choice as opposition members. We want to give them the opportunity to use that time how they see fit. If they have challenges with our legislation, this will give

them 40 more hours per session—40 more hours. 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 this, 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, putting the conditions in place to have small businesses succeed, 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 the things that we want to do, bringing trust and accountability back to Queen's Park. Speaker, that ability to cast a vote is our primary reason for being here. You know that; everyone in this assembly knows that. It's what all of our members in our constituencies voted for us to do. That's why they sent all of us here. That's why they sent me here from the town of Whitby: to be here to cast a vote—absolutely, it's to be here to vote. What this motion is doing is, we're opening the door to more and more debate.

The standing orders of this place provide members with ample opportunity to oppose or support anything that is 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.

Speaker, the way that the rules of debate under standing order 47 currently work is that they enable one caucus or even one member to effectively keep the rest of the House from debating for all but one second of debate—barely long enough to move forward with. 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, Speaker, that we are debating this afternoon adds debate: 40 hours of debate per session, the equivalent of three weeks of debate. It allows independent members of the Legislature—and we have many here in the chamber this afternoon—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 when the appropriate time comes forward. What we're doing here today by debating this motion is allowing the independent members to have an opportunity.

I just want to—I've got two minutes to sum up—restate some of the points that I made earlier. I know that the member from Barrie-Springwater-Oro-Medonte wants to join the debate.

Again, the people of Ontario elected us to get things done, and that is exactly what we're doing in the context of the motion. As I said earlier, the motion only extends

the current period for night sittings from eight days at the end of the session to 12. We believe that the additional four days will help us to move forward with some of the commitments that Ontario residents want us to help them achieve.

On applying Monday rules to opposition day debates that start earlier, 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. Starting earlier has the potential to give members an additional two hours to debate government legislation.

Speaker, as I enter the final part of my remarks on the removal of the 31-minute gap in private members' business, this in no way changes how much debating is done during private members' business, which we will be doing tomorrow afternoon, nor would it change the amount of debate that would take place if the Liberals regain party status. Finally, this fixes two standing orders that currently are in conflict with each other.

Finally, Speaker, going forward, I think that this particular motion addresses a number of issues that have been evident in the standing orders for a number of years. The time has come to address them. I would urge all members, including the opposition, to consider them carefully, because it allows for fuller, more robust debate of many of the issues that are important to Ontario residents, and they want us to move forward with the remedies.

Thank you very much, Speaker, and I look forward to further debate, particularly the comments from the member from Barrie-Springwater-Oro-Medonte.

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

1640

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's a pleasure for me to add my voice to the debate on motion number 4 from the member from Bay of Quinte, who seeks to modify the standing orders that we all work under. I have been around for a few years now, 11—it feels like way longer than that, Speaker—and I fully understand the importance of the standing orders. They are the rules of the game. They are the rules that we follow to make sure that the government has a chance to pass legislation and that the opposition has a chance to do their work of holding the government to account, making sure that they look at all sides to make sure that the legislation they bring forward is not going to have unforeseen consequences. They also make sure that when we do have independents sitting in the Legislature, they have an opportunity to be heard.

This morning we had repeated invitations from the government to work more collaboratively. During question period, almost every question was answered with the desire from the government and us to work more closely. At this point, Speaker, I would like to move an amendment to this motion forward that more or less answers the offer that had been made to us numerous times during question period this morning. The amendment reads as follows:

Delete everything after "That" in the first paragraph and replace with:

"a Select Committee on Modernizing the Standing Orders be appointed to consider and report to the House its observations and recommendations with respect to proposed changes to the standing orders that would better serve the democratic interests of the people of Ontario;

"That in developing its strategy and recommendations, the committee shall focus on the following:

"—measures that reflect the government's right to carry out its agenda and opposition parties' responsibility to hold the government to account;

"That the committee shall have the authority to call for persons, papers and things, and generally have such duties and powers as are required to carry out its mandate;

"That the committee be composed of five members from the government, one of which shall be the Chair, two members of the official opposition, one Liberal independent member and one Green independent; and

"That the committee shall report back to the House by no later than February 28, 2019."

Now that I have introduced this amendment, I will give it to my good page Jocelyn.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Madame Gélinas has brought forth an amendment to government motion number 4 stating to delete everything—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Dispense? Agreed?

Interjections: No.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): No—to delete everything after "That" in the first paragraph and replace it with:

"a Select Committee on Modernizing the Standing Orders be appointed to consider and report to the House its observations and recommendations with respect to proposed changes to the standing orders that would better serve the democratic interests of the people of Ontario;

"That in developing its strategy and recommendations, the committee shall focus on the following: measures that reflect the government's right to carry out its agenda and opposition parties' responsibility to hold the government to account;

"That the committee shall have the authority to call for persons, papers and things, and generally have such duties and powers as are required to carry out its mandate;

"That the committee be composed of five members from the government, one of which shall be the Chair, two members of the official opposition, one Liberal independent member and one Green independent; and

"That the committee shall report back to the House by no later than February 28, 2019."

I now turn this back to further debate from Madame Gélinas on the amendment.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You've got to call her by her riding.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from the Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker. You are free to call me whatever you see fit.

Interjections.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Whatever is fit.

I'm glad to say a few words about the amendment. Basically, what the amendment does is to make sure that we get it right. We fully support that the government has the right to move legislation forward. This is why we were elected. The most important part of my speech is that I will be sharing my time with the member from Timmins about this amendment. The second is that the opposition should be able to do their job of holding the government to account.

On this happy note, I will ask my colleague from Timmins to continue.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Timmins.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, I'm not happy to be participating in this debate either. I think any time that we find ourselves in these situations where we're being asked to give the government more power so that it can move its agenda faster and not give the opposition, first of all, the ability to hold the government to account—but, more importantly, to give the public the chance that it needs to be able to do what has to be done when it comes to coming before committee and telling government and opposition what it likes and dislikes about legislation.

What we're proposing here is that changing standing orders shouldn't just be a decision of the government alone. The government is saying, "Oh, I'm making standing order changes and these are all great because I looked at them and all of my members like it and the Premier likes it and all my political staff like it." I'm sure that they do because the standing orders are written in such a way in order to give you more power.

That's not what should be happening. What we should be doing is referring this matter—because there are legitimate issues that need to be dealt with when it comes to standing orders—to a select committee that we have suggested by way of this motion. The select committee would be comprised of an equal amount of members from the government to an equal amount of members from the opposition and would be chaired by the government. That select committee would have the authority to be able to look at our standing orders and to say, "All right. How do we deal with the issues that the government has raised in their motion in order to make these changes?" and any other changes that either the Liberal independents or the Green independent want to raise as well, because we know there are issues that they want to deal with, as there were issues that I wanted to deal with when we were without status not once but twice. I remember those days well.

Our position as New Democrats is that standing order changes shouldn't be made by one party. Standing order changes should be made by the assembly—in other words, those members here—in some sort of way that allows everybody to be able to participate. But more importantly, Mr. Speaker, by referring the matter to a select committee, the committee would have the ability to call witnesses, to listen to experts around standing orders from places like the House of Commons or other Legislatures across Canada, or others who happen to be fairly good experts when it comes to the issue of standing orders—because there are

a few people out there in some of our universities who have done research on this stuff and actually are fairly knowledgeable about it—and, further, be able to call previous House leaders from Liberal, NDP and Conservative governments to look at how you make this place work better.

The basic idea of Parliament is this: The government is the only one that has the right to call an order of the House. In other words, they control the agenda. Once that order is called, the government must get its way. I said this in the debate the other day and the government said, "Oh, the opposition just wants to stop us." No. We don't have the authority, nor should we have the authority, to stop the government. But the government, in being able to pass its agenda, also has to have an opposition that is able to hold them to account so that we're able to look at legislation and say, "Here's what's good and here's what is bad."

The government has been saying for the last couple of days, because I guess they are good lines to use in the type of debate that we just came out of, "Oh, you guys are just being oppositional. You're slowing everything down and you don't want to work with us." When you come here and you say that you want to deny our rights under the Constitution, yes, we're not going to work with you. Surprise. My God, when you come before us and say it's your right to be able to cancel the cap-and-trade program, nobody argues that. In fact, our party has issues with the model around cap-and-trade as it was proposed by the Liberals. But you're coming here and saying, "We're going to cancel it, and we're going to have a plan to make a plan." We don't think that's a very good idea, quite frankly.

1650

To cancel contracts the way that you did on your very first bill that you introduced in this House—you would have gone spinning in the opposition, as Conservatives in opposition to the Liberals, if they would have done that. Oops, they did do that. Remember that? Do you remember the gas plants—we sat on committee together—where the government cancelled contracts on gas plants in order to be able to game the system for a provincial election to protect a couple of seats? We, as a committee, had referred—if you remember—the whole situation to committee, and the committee dealt with the issue of contempt.

So the government across the way is very cute in saying, "You've got to work with us." I have no problem working with the government if they have bills that are reasonable, that we're able to support and that deal with things like homelessness, that deal with things like jobs—80,000 jobs lost last August—and be able to deal with issues having to do with transportation, not just for Toronto but for other municipalities and other regions of the province. There are all kinds of issues. Look at Kashechewan and kids who don't have a school to go to. There are all kinds of things that we could work on together, and we, as New Democrats, are prepared to do what has to be done.

But for the government to suggest, "The only way we can do things is for us to have all the ideas and us to have all the power to do what we want. And the opposition?

Don't listen to them. Don't give them any time. They just get in our way." My God, the institution of Parliament and the way it was designed is all about that basic tenet. The government proposes, the government has the right to pass its agenda—you should never have rules that prevent a government from passing its agenda because the system would break. But with that, the quid pro quo is, the opposition has to have the ability to hold the government to account.

And we need to fit the public in that process. The public is an important part. That's what we do here. We all got elected. I don't care what side of the House you're on or what party you're from, but we all got elected with the idea that we come here and we serve our constituents. The minute that we forget that the constituents have to be at the heart of our decisions and that the constituents have to be listened to, not just at election time but in between elections when governments are in their mandate, then you've lost.

No wonder people don't respect politicians and respect the institution of Parliament and others, because you see things like this going on. You saw the debate that we just went through recently in regard to the "notwithstanding" clause in Bill 31. People see that and they scratch their heads.

You look at the standing order changes that are being proposed: The government says, "Oh, but it's such a good thing that we're doing. There's going to be more debate, and that's a good thing." It would be a good thing if there were rules around here that allow us to do some constructive work together. But all you're doing is extending how much time the House can sit at the end of the session, because you can go from 6 p.m. to midnight now in the last three weeks rather than the last two weeks, and then you take opposition days and say that where the opposition has an opposition day, you can lob on an extra two hours of debate. That's all about accelerating your agenda.

I don't argue for a second that we should have a system that slows things down so much that the government can't pass their bills. That wouldn't work. But, certainly to God, we're able to have a process by which we give legislation proper time. I'm not even talking about proper time for debate in the Legislature—that's important—

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's just due process.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —but due process to allow the public to get involved.

All of your government bills you have moved to third reading have gone there without going to committee. That is very troubling, Speaker. The fact that we're not using our committees means that the public can't come before us and say, "I like" or "I don't like," "I propose" or "I condemn." If we don't engage the public in our democracy, the public will tune out.

If you look at 50% participation—49%, at times—of people that vote in our elections provincially, you have to ask yourself the question: Why? There are all kinds of reasons, but I think one of the key reasons is, they feel disconnected and they feel they are not being listened to. How many times have you heard it, as you've gone out and knocked on doors in your riding to get elected for the

first time or to get re-elected? You go to the door and the constituent says, "Oh, there we go. We only see you guys at election time." Those of us who are successful in being re-elected are the ones they see in between elections and that we're not there just to ask them for a vote, but we're there to say, "How can I help you?"

Every member in this assembly has a constituency office or offices. The public calls us; that's one way that they can contact us in order to do the work. But there is another important component, and that is committee. You have to take the public seriously. Yes, you were elected. Yes, with 40% of the vote, you got a majority in this House. And yes, with that majority, the government has the right to control the agenda and decide what happens as far as policy in this province. But there needs to be due process in the Legislature that is for the good of all members—not just the members of the government, not just the members of the opposition, but all members—that has at its heart the idea that the public is being respected. If the public feels that they're being respected by way of us listening to them between elections and not just asking for their votes at elections, I think, then, the confidence of the public when it comes to the Legislature and its individual members will become much stronger. And isn't that a good thing? Shouldn't we be figuring out how it is that we re-engage the public and help build their confidence toward this institution called the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, our Parliament?

That's why we, as New Democrats, are saying that standing orders should not be changed by one party in power in order to advance its agenda. That's just about how you can hoard more power. That's all you're doing here, and other governments have done it in the past.

What New Democrats are proposing is a different way of doing it. Your government has been saying for the last two days, "Work with us," as my good friend the member from Nickel Belt said. I thought that was a very, very good way to start this debate. Well, you want us to work with you? We're prepared to do that, but you need to create the process by which we do that in a way that is fair for both sides and, more importantly, is fair to the public. The select committee that we would create would have the authority to listen to the public, hear what they have to say, tell them what it is that we want to do and to engage with us in discussion about how we can rebrand our democracy in such a way that people can start having confidence about how this democracy works.

We are the New Democratic Party. We chose the word "democratic" in the New Democratic Party title for a reason. What is central for us as social democrats—and that's what I consider myself, a social democrat—is that you do it by way of the institution of Parliament so that people are able to have confidence in the system; that we are transparent; that we do things in a way where people hear what we're doing and we are transparent; that there are not any shenanigans or deals made in the middle of the night or up in dark rooms; and that we do everything under the light of the public. That includes us being able to use

our standing committees—and, in this case, a select committee—to change the standing orders.

I end on this: It is wrong for the assembly to change the standing orders just because the government says so, and to allow the standing orders to stand in a way that is only favourable to the government. That's the kind of thing that we see in some countries around the world, where people finally say, "I can't live here no more," and they come here and seek refuge in our country. One of the reasons they do that—they say, "Where I come from, I don't have any rights, and it ain't very democratic or transparent." They come to Canada because we are that shining beacon on the hill.

Canada is a nation that believes in democracy. As this assembly, we are so blessed to have people from around the world, who have come here both as refugees and as immigrants—people like Sol Mamakwa, from the First Nations; myself, as a francophone; and you, from different parts of this province, with all kinds of different ethnicities—to be able to sit in this Legislature and understand that we are a country of immigrants and we need to be able to respect each other, and that we do that by way of our institutions. If we don't respect each other in this place enough to be able to draft rules in this place in a way that is non-partisan and co-operative, then we're saying to those people who have chosen Canada as a place to live because they have left tyranny, "This is starting to look familiar."

I ask my friends across the aisle, and I ask my friends as independents and members of the Green Party, to work with us and to deal with the issues that you may have. I know that the Liberals and the Greens have issues that they want to have dealt with in the standing orders, but do that in a process that respects the role of all members of this assembly and that, at the end of the day, respects the public and says that the public has to be central in everything that we do.

1700

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

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: We have our own amendment as well that we want to introduce. It's in the spirit of ensuring debates that reflect the diversity of opinions and also respect the rights of constituents who are represented by independents.

For myself, I have no problem with the amendment put forward by the NDP, provided that we are, in the meantime, ensured proper ability to participate in this House, in light of the motion that I'm presenting here.

My motion is to amend government order number 4. I move that the motion be amended by adding at the end " ; and"—it's very long to read, but I gave a copy already to the House leader and the House leader for the New Democrats—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me—sorry to interrupt. Based on what you just said, you need to amend the amendment, not amend government motion number 4. This is an amendment to the amendment, correct?

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: I move the amendment to the amendment be amended by adding at the end:

"That pending the work of the select committee on modernizing the standing orders,

"Standing order 24(b) is deleted and the following substituted:

"24(b) Notwithstanding clause (a), at the commencement of any debate set out in this standing order, the first speaker for any recognized party in the House may speak not more than 60 minutes, an independent Liberal member may speak for 30 minutes and a Green independent member may speak for five minutes:

"(i) debate on second reading of a government bill;

"(ii) debate on third reading of a government bill;

"(iii) debate on the address in reply to the speech from the throne;

"(iv) debate on the budget motion;

"(v) debate on any other substantive government motion.'

Standing order 24(d) is amended by adding, after the word 'party,' 'and any Liberal independent member may divide his or her time among any other of the Liberal independent members.'

Standing order 24 is amended by adding the following clause:

"(f) In conducting any debate under this standing order, the Speaker shall have regard to the rotation recommendation set out in section 1 of the schedule to the standing orders.'

Standing order 31(c) is deleted and the following is substituted:

"(c) One Liberal independent member may be entitled to make one member's statement each day, except that once every eight sessional days, such statement shall instead be allotted to the Green independent member.'

Standing order 33(c) is amended by adding, at the end of the first line, 'and to each independent member'.

Standing order 37(i) is deleted and the following substituted:

"37(i) The Speaker has the discretion to permit an independent member to participate in oral questions. In exercising this discretion, the Speaker shall have regard to the rotation recommendations set out in section 2 of the schedule to the standing orders.'

Standing order 43(a) (iii) and (iv) are deleted and the following substituted:

"(iii) shall be distributed such that the official opposition is entitled to designate four days, and the Liberal independents may designate one day;

"(iv) shall be taken up upon the commencement of orders of the day in the afternoon on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday, as the case may be, the time available being apportioned such that the independent members shall have 20% of the available time, to be divided among them at their discretion, with the remaining time apportioned equally among the recognized parties in the House; the time for a reply by the mover of the motion shall be included in the time apportioned to the party of which the

mover is a member, or to the independent members, as the case may be.'

"Standing order 44(a) is deleted and the following substituted:

"44(a) In any session, upon proper notice, the official opposition is entitled to not more than three motions of want of confidence in the government; the recognized party having the third-largest membership in the House is entitled to not more than two such motions, any other recognized party to one, and the independent Liberals to one."

"Standing order 47(b) is amended by deleting the words 'apportioned equally among the recognized parties' and substituting 'apportioned such that the independent members shall have 20% of the available time to be divided among them at their discretion, with the remaining time to be apportioned equally among the recognized parties in the House.'

"Standing order 54 is amended by adding after the word 'parties,' "and to each independent member".

"Standing order 63(d) is amended by deleting the words 'apportioned equally among recognized parties' and substituting 'apportioned such that the independent members shall have 20% of the available time, to be divided among them at their discretion, with the remaining time apportioned equally among the recognized parties in the House'.

"Standing order 64 is amended by deleting words 'apportioned equally among the recognized parties' and substituting 'apportioned such that the independent members shall have 20% of the available time to be divided among them at their discretion, with the remaining time apportioned equally among the recognized parties in the House'.

"Standing order 67(b) is amended by deleting the words 'apportioned equally among the recognized parties' and substituting 'apportioned such that the independent members shall have 20% of the available time to be divided among them at their discretion, with the remaining time apportioned equally among the recognized parties in the House'.

"Standing order 77(a) is amended by adding 'and to all independent members'.

"Standing order 98(a) is amended by adding the following subclause:

"(ii.1) A period of eight minutes allotted to the Liberal independent members, and a period of four minutes allotted to the Green independent member.'

"Standing order 98(a)(iv) is deleted.

"Standing order 113 is amended by adding the following clause:

"113(e.1) A Liberal independent member on any committee may provide written notification to the Clerk of the Committee, before or within the first 30 minutes of a committee meeting being called to order, that another Liberal independent member will be temporarily substituting for all or part of a committee meeting.'

"Standing order 125 is deleted and the following is substituted:

"(125) Following the election of a Chair and Vice-Chair at its first meeting in each session, a standing committee shall appoint a subcommittee on committee business, consisting of the Chair of the standing committee as Chair, one member from each of the recognized parties on the committee and for those committees whose membership includes an independent Liberal, that member, to meet from time to time at the call of the Chair or at the request of any member thereof and to report to the committee on the business of the committee.'

The following schedule to the standing orders is added:

"Schedule

"1. Recommended rotation during debates under standing order 24.

"Government, official opposition, Liberal independent member; government, official opposition, Green independent member, ('bankable' in accordance with the Speaker's statement given on July 19, 2018), then repeat the rotation.

"2. Recommended rotation during oral questions

"Official opposition—one question and two supplementary questions

"Official opposition—one question and two supplementary questions

"Liberal independent member—one question and one supplementary question

"Independent member—one question and one supplementary question

"Followed by a repeated rotation of:

"Official opposition—one question and one supplementary question;

"Government—one question and one supplementary question

"Official opposition—one question and one supplementary question

"Government—one question and one supplementary question

"Any one independent member—one question and one supplementary question."

I want just to say that this is the 2003—

Interjection.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: All right, I'll sit down. I will give it to page Simon to bring back.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Madame Des Rosiers, member from Ottawa–Vanier, has brought forward an amendment to the amendment to government order 4, and it reads—

Interjection: Dispense.

Interjection: No.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I heard a no—that the motion be amended by adding, at the end,

"That pending the work of the select committee on modernizing the standing orders,

"Standing order 24(b) is deleted and the following substituted"—

Interjection.

1710

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Madame Des Rosiers, the member from Ottawa–Vanier, has stated that she wants to amend the NDP amendment by deleting everything after the word “standing orders.”

Therefore, she moves that the motion be amended by adding at the end: “and standing order 24(b) is deleted”—

Interjection: Dispense.

Interjection: No.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I heard a no.

“and;

“Standing order 24(b) is deleted and the following substituted:

“24(b) Notwithstanding clause (a), at the commencement of any debate set out in this standing order, the first speaker for any recognized party in the House may speak not more than 60 minutes, an independent Liberal member may speak for 30 minutes and a Green independent member may speak for five minutes:

“(i) debate on second reading of a government bill;

“(ii) debate on third reading of a government bill;

“(iii) debate on the address in reply to the speech from the throne;

“(iv) debate on the budget motion;

“(v) debate on any other substantive government motion.”

“Standing order 24(d) is amended by adding, after the word ‘party,’ ‘and any Liberal independent member may divide his or her time among any other of the Liberal independent members.’

“Standing order 24 is amended by adding the following clause:

“(f) In conducting any debate under this standing order, the Speaker shall have regard to the rotation recommendation set out in section 1 of the schedule to the standing orders.”

“Standing order 31(c) is deleted and the following is substituted:

“(c) One Liberal independent member may be entitled to make one member’s statement each day, except that once every eight sessional days, such statement shall instead be allotted to the Green independent member.”

“Standing order 33(c) is amended by adding, at the end of the first line, ‘and to each independent member’.

“Standing order 37(i) is deleted and the following substituted:

“37(i) The Speaker has the discretion to permit an independent member to participate in oral questions. In exercising this discretion, the Speaker shall have regard to the rotation recommendations set out in section 2 of the schedule to the standing orders.”

“Standing order 43(a) (iii) and (iv) are deleted and the following substituted:

“(iii) shall be distributed such that the official opposition is entitled to designate four days, and the Liberal independents may designate one day;

“(iv) shall be taken up upon the commencement of orders of the day in the afternoon on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday, as the case may be, the time available being

apportioned such that the independent members shall have 20% of the available time, to be divided among them at their discretion, with the remaining time apportioned equally among the recognized parties in the House; the time for a reply by the mover of the motion shall be included in the time apportioned to the party of which the mover is a member, or to the independent members, as the case may be.”

“Standing order 44(a) is deleted and the following substituted:

“44(a) In any session, upon proper notice, the official opposition is entitled to not more than three motions of want of confidence in the government; the recognized party having the third-largest membership in the House is entitled to not more than two such motions, any other recognized party to one, and the independent Liberals to one.”

“Standing order 47(b) is amended by deleting the words ‘apportioned equally among the recognized parties’ and substituting ‘apportioned such that the independent members shall have 20% of the available time to be divided among them at their discretion, with the remaining time to be apportioned equally among the recognized parties in the House.’

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"“(125) Following the election of a Chair and Vice-Chair at its first meeting in each session, a standing committee shall appoint a subcommittee on committee business, consisting of the Chair of the standing committee as Chair, one member from each of the recognized parties on the committee and for those committees whose membership includes an independent Liberal, that member, to meet from time to time at the call of the Chair or at the request of any member thereof and to report to the committee on the business of the committee.”

1720

"The following schedule to the standing orders is added:

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"“1. Recommended rotation during debates under standing order 24.

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"“Official opposition—one question and one supplementary question

"“Government—one question and one supplementary question

"“Any one independent member—one question and one supplementary question.””

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Just to clarify, the beginning of the motion was, again, to amend an amendment brought forward by the NDP, which was an amendment to government order number 4. We've got that clear? "Pending the work of the Select Committee on Modernizing the Standing Orders"—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Unless you would like me to read it again, and I don't think you do.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes.

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

Time has expired on debate from the member from Ottawa–Vanier, so now I move to further debate.

Mr. Doug Downey: I rise to speak to the amendment to the amendment to the main order, number 4. Before I get into the heart of it, I want to acknowledge the member from Kingston and the Islands having given his inaugural speech. In other inaugural speeches there was a chance for comments from others and he didn't have that, so I just wanted to say that I really, really enjoyed the discussion about the history of Kingston and Gord Downie, who I share a last name with phonetically, but it's spelled differently. I have a good story for you about how the Tragically Hip were founded, but I'll tell you off-line because I don't know that I have permission to tell it in public.

I thank you also for the Chez Piggy reference. I now have a new place to try when I'm coming though the area. I just want to acknowledge your inaugural speech and say that I quite enjoyed it.

When we started debate this afternoon there was a suggestion that the member from Bay of Quinte is in fact the best government House leader. I can't vouch for years past, but I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that he's the best government House leader I've ever served under.

If we're going to amend things, I was thinking about maybe bringing an amendment to the amendment to the amendment to government order number 4—but I won't—allowing the government whip to get double time when he talks. But I won't do that, Mr. Speaker.

I want to talk about the House and how hard the House is working, and how hard our government is working to make change. I asked the legislative library a couple of weeks ago about the last time this House sat in both July and August. The answer came back. It was 1997, when they sat for one day in July and a few days in August. I thought, "Well, that's not that far ago." I asked them to go back a level. They went back and it was 1993 under Premier Rae at the time. They sat virtually all of July and one day in August. I was trying to find a government that sat substantially in both months, as we have. I asked the legislative library again to answer that for me, and the answer is that it has never happened back to 1867. That's how hard this government is working.

Mr. Speaker, I want to address a couple of pieces as it relates to our friends across the aisle. We've seen this kind of amendment to an amendment to drag out time: lengths that I'm sure people love that I've never heard of before—stall tactics, people burning up their own time. It's really a shame, because I do want to hear from the opposite members; I do want to hear what they have to say. But only in the world of the opposition and the Liberal Party would you ask to have more bureaucracy and process to be more efficient. I don't understand why those amendments would be made. It's working wonderfully in the sense that we're hearing what they want to change. That's how this is supposed to work. We put forward an order and then we have input from amendments and other amendments, and we get fulsome debate.

But here's the thing, Mr. Speaker. We need a bit more time to get all of the things done that we need to do. We ran on a platform of getting a ton of things done. So adding four nights on top of the eight nights, that's a way for us to get more done. We're here anyway. It would be very helpful to have more time to flesh out ideas, to hear from opposition members and to hear from both the member from Guelph—have a little more time to share ideas, because he heard from people, I'm sure, not just from Guelph. The leader of the Green Party heard ideas from all over Ontario, and we want to give a chance to have those comments as we bring ideas forward.

Now, it's at about this time that I think back to when I was a page on the dais, and that was some many years ago. Premier Bill Davis was in the chair at the front. We were sitting there thinking, "What are these people talking about? An amendment to an amendment to get more efficient, something about a standing order"—it gets very confusing, Mr. Speaker. So, for the pages and for those watching at home, I just want to recap what a standing order is.

Standing orders are the rules that we operate by in this House. A standing order sets out structure, it sets out rules and it sets out how much time somebody can speak to something and who gets to speak when. It does get complicated because there are a lot of people who have a lot of ideas and, in this instance, four different parties represented. So every sitting is a little bit different. Every sitting is a little bit unique.

So here we are, three months into a new government, and finding that the uniqueness of where we find ourselves needs some tweaking. We have a lot of things we want to get done, the opposition has a lot of things they want to say, and we have a third and a fourth party who also want to have input. So we're making these changes.

The interesting thing is this: We're creating more capacity for input. Another government might say, "No, let's shut down the other side." We're not taking anything away from the other side. We're just adding more and making sure that they get a chance to give us their input. What they do with that time, Mr. Speaker—I've heard things like, "We're being denied our rights. Our party has issues with things but we're getting shut down." Well, how you spend your time is up to you. We're going to give the opportunity, if this passes, the main order, and we'll see what happens with the amendments. But at the end of the day, we're creating more sitting nights. We're creating 40 more hours, which is substantial. In a normal job, that's a whole other workweek.

We need stability in the rules, but we need the rules to work. We have some pretty good stability happening now. Everybody knows the rules, and I have to say that outside of slamming some desks, asking to get kicked out and those kinds of theatrics—outside of that, I think it's working pretty well. Everybody is being pretty respectful of the rules. I have to say there's even some collegiality among the House on all sides. I think these little tweaks, quite frankly, make us work harder, because we want to work harder, because we want to get more done. People in

Ontario expect us to do that. People in Ontario expect us to get our projects through and they want fulsome debate, so we're asking for more debate.

1730

If we're going to go down the road of some of these ironically called reasoned amendments, where I get a list of the lakes in Ontario—okay, if you want to spend your time doing that, that's fine, but you can't turn around and then complain you don't have any time to say anything substantial.

In terms of a specific change of moving adjournment on time allocation, it would be interesting for the people of Ontario to know what happens when the bells ring. In fact, I'm going to just reiterate: What am I talking about, bells ringing? When we're waiting to do a vote, there are bells in this building and in government buildings around here that literally ring and we have a certain amount of time to get here to vote. Sometimes they're set at 30 minutes and sometimes they're set at five minutes. I know, Mr. Speaker, you know that as well. But what happens during those 30 minutes? There's not any debate. Nobody is engaging in ideas with the other side, so it's really not advancing the debate at all. It's just more time. It's just lost time.

The main order which is being amended and sub-amended is, quite frankly, taking away from our time to do debate. I think debate is healthy. That is how our system is built. We're to put forward ideas; the opposition is to oppose the ideas but not oppose the ideas just on principle. The system is actually built on the opposition and the third party and the fourth party constructively opposing, coming up with ideas and saying, "Here's how we would like to do things." It's happening as we speak. It's happening right now because we brought forward an idea on the order, order number 4, and we had some constructive input, a very specific piece of input for the amendment, and then a very specific change to that and we're debating it. That is the whole point.

Now, there are a lot of amendments. The amendment to the amendment is quite lengthy, as we heard twice. Maybe we need more time to debate those sorts of things, maybe more time of that and less time to just hear the bells ring. I just don't think that really gets us there.

We want to reach out for co-operation. We do want to hear other ideas and we do want to talk to the other side. The remaining members of the Liberal Party who are here have some experience, having been in government, and it would be useful to hear from them with comments, as order number 4 allows.

The NDP have been in the House; many of them are veterans in the House and they have things to offer. They've seen change. They, I expect, know what was in the cap-and-trade stuff and some of these other bills that they supported with the Liberals. I expect that they know how those came to be and why they're there. I guess we'll hear from them on occasion—not just the personal attacks but the actual substance of the issues that we're debating. It's a big party. There are 40 in the opposition, so some are more constructive than others, in my short experience here

so far. But we want to make more time for more constructive input.

It was suggested the government is doing this to gain more power and that they're not letting the opposition do its job. Mr. Speaker, we're not taking anything away from the other side. If you look at the order, we're not taking anything. All we're doing is making them work some more. We're going to be here a little bit more, so that when time changes from 3 o'clock to 1 o'clock, it doesn't inadvertently cause something else to get knocked out of the box.

It's pretty important that when we change one piece that it doesn't take away the rights of the opposition and the other parties inadvertently. We're tweaking it because we're in a unique situation here.

I don't hear the opposition at all suggesting that we shouldn't be sitting more. To be fair, I'm not hearing that. I'm not hearing the official opposition say that we shouldn't be giving more opportunity to the Liberal Party and to the Green Party to have input. So I think there's a level of co-operation here. I think there are things that we agree upon. On the little bit that we don't, all that I've heard the official opposition say is, I guess, that they agree with everything in it except that they want a bureaucracy to look at it more. That's a pretty easy one for me—the less bureaucracy, the better—but that's just the way that's going to be.

Mr. Speaker, the other piece is that we're extending democracy. We are actually opening the doors to more input from more people over more time. That's just a fact. We do have a lot to do. We promised the people of Ontario that we would make government more efficient. That doesn't mean that we're going to do less government in terms of time and debate; we're actually offering to do more debate because maybe we need more discussion and more ideas to be able to find those efficiencies. We welcome ideas from everywhere on efficiencies and accountabilities and how we can make government work better for the people of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting how people from different parties, when they go to other areas, sometimes come up with the same conclusion. I look forward to those consultations.

I just wanted to note, because my riding is Barrie-Springwater-Oro-Medonte and the leader of the Green Party recently had an annual meeting there—and I thank you for dropping some money in my area. I appreciate that; thank you. It's a good chance for the leader of the Green Party to hear from some of the people I hear from. Now we can have a real conversation about some of the ideas that will come out of that. I really want to hear what all the members have to say.

Mr. Speaker, the time gap on the private members' bills, the 31-minute time gap, goes back to: What happens in that time gap? What happens when you lose time? You get a coffee, you return phone calls, you do a few other things. But you're not really engaged in government business and government debate, like we should be. So

why not be more efficient in that sense, and just get back to work?

The current standing orders don't allow for the independent members to have the ability to make statements on government policy. Just think about that for a moment, Mr. Speaker. We have eight individuals out of 124 who have no ability to make statements. I don't know how anybody could oppose opening that up. And we're not taking it from anybody. This is not a zero-sum game where we're taking it from the official opposition and giving it to the eight; we're making a bigger pie. We're creating more time so that we can hear more from more people. I don't hear anybody actually getting up to argue with that, because it's a really good idea. All it takes is for the current government to say, "We're willing to work harder. We're willing to work harder to accommodate the reception of more ideas so that when we put ideas forth and we hear the opposition, we get the absolute best result possible."

Mr. Speaker, we're committed to doing this for Ontario, we're committed to doing this for the people and, quite frankly, for the next generation, to build this thing so that it operates properly. We're not just changing this for the week or for the month; we're changing it for the entire 42nd session of Parliament.

The other piece, Mr. Speaker, is that we've seen some gamesmanship, I guess, for lack of a better word—I don't know what else to call it—but it's within the rules, so it's fair game, where we have adjournment on a time allocation. What that does, inadvertently, unfortunately, is it holds up the ability for others to participate in the debate. One member of this House can stand up and scupper the debate that's happening in the House. I don't think that was the intent. I'm not sure, but whether it was the intent or not, we're changing that. We're changing that so that more debate can happen and we can stay on task and we can get to work.

If people are just interested in being obstructionist, I'm sorry; this will take away that tool. But nobody is interested—the real people out there who are at work and taking their kids to dance and taking their kids to hockey and working and trying to get by. They're not interested in obstructionist nonsense, Mr. Speaker. They want us to work; they want us to debate ideas on their merits. I have full confidence that this House is capable of doing that. We will get there at some point. I think maybe, when we extend the comments to others, that may change the debate a bit.

1740

It's interesting how when one person in this House speaks, it sometimes changes the tone of the entire House, just with the topic or the way they speak, the way they elocute. It's really interesting to me how one person can change the tone. It's important because every single member of this House was elected to do a job. They were elected by the people in their riding and they have a right to be heard. The changes here to this order, order number 4, allow that; they respect that. But right now, that's not happening. We have eight members who don't have the ability to have their voices heard.

Interjection.

Mr. Doug Downey: I'm speaking to the amendment to the amendment, so I'm talking in general principles of what I think is important.

The other piece, Mr. Speaker—I'm just checking my notes so that I don't miss anything in particular.

I just want to touch on, again, adding 40 hours of debate on government legislation. That's a long time. Now, the public knows, if they're watching, that we don't sit from 9 to 5. That's not really how it works. There are breaks, and question period is in the middle, and there are other pieces that don't count toward those 40 hours. But we're adding a full 40 hours. We're adding four full nights, if we need them. It doesn't say we're definitely going to do them, but if the government agenda is not moving forward and we're not getting taxes lowered and we're not getting the job done for the people of Ontario as they expect us to do, we need the tools to make sure that everything gets through.

Look, I'm very optimistic about the changes as set out. Again, I just don't want more bureaucracy. I don't want a more complicated system to try and make a system simpler. This is simple. It gives time to others. It doesn't take away from anybody. It's pretty straightforward stuff, Mr. Speaker. It extends democracy, which is why we're here. We're here to extend democracy, not to shorten it.

I think these are wonderful changes. I look forward to more debate from others on the amendment to the amendment and then maybe debate on the amendment and then maybe some more debate on the order, which I know sounds confusing, but it's all the same topic: us trying to serve all the people of Ontario better.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to debate.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Of course, it's a pleasure for me to join this debate today on behalf of the people of Waterloo. I have heard many concerns from my community—a very engaged and educated community who really value their democratic rights and hold their representation to account, quite honestly. It has caused me to actually think a lot about power, because we start every day here in this Legislature by reading the non-denominational prayer. The Speaker stands in his place and he says—or she says—“Give to each member of this Legislature a strong and abiding sense of the great responsibilities laid upon us. Guide us here in our deliberations. Give us a deep and thorough understanding of the needs of the people we serve. Help us to use power wisely and well.”

I feel that the timing of this debate is quite something, given that it is Democracy Week here in the country. The electoral officer at the federal level issued a statement earlier today saying, “A vibrant democracy requires informed, active citizens. There is no better time to spur citizens' curiosity and engagement than in their formative secondary years.” They are proud to launch this initiative that engages youth in the power infrastructure, the structural institutions that hold power, and this place is one of those places. And yet people have had a very difficult time getting into this place and they have not been invited by

this government to weigh in on the pieces of legislation that have passed already. To have not involved the people of this city on Bill 5, for instance, at the committee level, to not invite them in and give them the opportunity to speak to that substantive piece of legislation, was truly fairly unprecedented, and the people of this great city, I think, will hold this government to account in that regard.

I think context is important, because we're being told—the messages are clearly evolving from the Premier's office on a regular basis, and the language has changed somewhat. There's this pseudo reaching across the aisle: “Work with us.” How can we work with you when we're not even in the same room as you? How is that even possible, when you are introducing legislation which, for instance, will limit debate? Even your House leader, the self-proclaimed best House leader of the province of Ontario, had said in his speech, when standing orders motion 4 was introduced, that the opposition won't like the change, nor does it like it when the government uses time allocation to curtail debate. He said, “I sure didn't like it when I was in opposition,” and yet here we are, Mr. Speaker.

This is why I was thinking about power: I was wondering how power changes perception of your responsibilities as public servants and how easy it is to shape-shift in this regard and reframe what I thought was a very principled position of some of my colleagues.

I think sometimes for the newer members it's difficult because they come into this place and, quite honestly, the government has been very hard at work creating chaos. We've been spinning a little bit, and I want to be honest about that. But to former colleagues who I knew, who sat right here beside us, side by side—on many issues, we were able to work together, and the issue of time allocation did come up a lot under the former Liberal government. Gilles, you'll remember this particularly.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Almost every bill.

Ms. Catherine Fife: The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke used to sit in this very place, and he was a formidable heckler. I know that he misses that; he is now the Minister of Transportation. But this is what he said on time allocation on May 7, 2018—not even that long ago, really. This is September, right? It was just May. It was four months ago. This is what the minister said:

“When you have a time allocation motion such as this, that restricts the debate to a minuscule 10 minutes, you really have to ask yourself if the government is acting in the best interests of the people or it is acting in what it considers to be the best interests of itself....’legislation is enacted in the way that is in your best interests.’”

On May 1, the now Minister of Transportation said, “The time allocation motion, in so many ways, Speaker, talks about the actions of a democratic institution and an undemocratic government that has turned it into a dictatorship.” Then he would usually, you know, bring the hammer down, I'm sure you recall.

The same member, actually, on November 15: “When we should be debating legislation, we're debating time allocation motions,” just as we did this morning, in this

very House, with this government. “Speaker, I ask: Did the people send us here to debate time allocation motions?” They did not. “Speaker: They would rather decide that their calendar comes before the people of Ontario.”

That is exactly where we are right now in this place in the history of this province. We are putting a calendar, an agenda, ahead of pulling in the democratic voices, the elected voices—because when you disrespect the official opposition, you are also disrespecting the people who sent us here. Let’s remember just for one second, dreaming of, one day, electoral reform in this province—it will happen eventually, because people will reach a tipping point.

Applause.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much to the Green member.

But in the last election the PCs got 40.64% of the vote and the New Democrats got 33.57% of the vote. When you limit our ability to bring to this legislative floor the concerns of the people we serve, you are really disrespecting the democratic institutions that we all say we value.

Time allocation is one of those tools that we have in this tool box—people keep talking about the tool box; I don’t know where I can get this tool box. Because it seems that the tools at our disposal, representing 33.5% of the voters who voted in this last election, are getting broken; those tools are being lost; those tools are being stolen. That’s the truth of the matter.

1750

Now, on time allocation as well, the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, my friend from Nepean—when the Liberals brought in time allocation on this floor, the member from Nepean would really school the Liberals on this, I have to tell you. On November 14, 2017, she said, “It’s my pleasure to rise in debate today. I wish it were about Bill 166, the Strengthening Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, but really what we are here to debate is time allocation. In essence, it is a closure motion which the government is bringing forward so that we will limit the debate on” this important topic.

The Liberals “would routinely criticize the previous Conservative administration for invoking closure. We would have passages and excerpts from the Liberal government on how they would oppose the invocation of closure. Of course, one of our favourites was the member from St. Catharines”—I do miss Jim a little bit, I have to tell you—“who opposed time allocation and closure motions, until they formed a government, and then they would routinely invoke closure themselves, as they have today.”

This is ironic, right? I’m quoting the past official opposition, who was critiquing the former Liberal government, who also critiqued the Conservative government for also bringing in time allocation. You can’t make this stuff up, because it’s in Hansard, so it’s here forever.

That’s from the member from Nepean.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs, who has been up a lot, the member from Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, on May 30, 2017, said about time allocation: “They’ve been trying to choke off our

democratic right and our constituents’ democratic right to speak to these bills, and they’ve pushed ahead with this bill without proper consultation or listening to the concerns and the suggestions brought forward by the opposition. Even a bill, Speaker, with the best intentions can have some unintended consequences if you’re not open to listening to and considering other points of view”—like the people of Ontario.

I have to say, I never thought that I would be here, in this position, talking about a government that—I mean, it took a long time for the Conservatives to get to this place in history. They made promises about what kind of government they would be, around the openness and the transparency, and to have them bring in, and limit, within the first 100 days, a piece of legislation like government order number 4, which will limit our ability to participate in debates and to inform legislation and to really, sometimes, educate—there is a crossover here around education between the members of the official opposition and the government. This is really the culmination, in a quarter century of the opposition, the minority voices—we have to always be cognizant of the minority voices in any democratic institution, because that’s what drives most of us to understand that we are not all equal. Our goals, though, are to address the power imbalance that exists in this province.

Over 30 years ago at Queen’s Park, evening sittings ended. There became dedicated time for private members’ business on Thursdays. That still exists today, for now. We’ve still got our fingers crossed. Members could provide responses to ministerial statements. Members’ statements were added. I think that we can all agree that that’s a good thing. And they created an order for oral questions, which also was really good.

Then David Peterson’s Liberal government, which was against the opposition from the NDP, changed the standing orders. They limited the division bells on a recorded vote, so you’re following in some very Liberal footsteps by doing this. They allowed the chief whip of any recognized party to defer a vote until the next sessional day. They created opposition days; that’s a good thing.

And then, when Mike Harris got elected—and I still have to say that it’s his fault that I’m here, because of Bill 160, 20 years ago. What Mr. Harris—and this is actually from the Canadian Parliamentary Review: “Opposition tactics led by Mr. Harris moved the culture at Queen’s Park from civility to direct competition.”

So here we are: We’re right back where we started from. It’s clearly a very adversarial culture that we have in this House, and as the official opposition, and also as the third party over the years, we have tried desperately to ensure that legislation has its due process. In fact, we tabled 12,000 amendments to the government’s amalgamation bill back 20 years ago. I remember those days. Even John Michael McGrath from TVO says, “From 1989 to 1997—across three Legislatures led by three different parties—the powers of the opposition went from being substantial to barely existing.”

New governments come into the Legislature, full of energy and a desire for change, and that's fine. That they also come in and trample on the established rules and traditions is a problem. That is a problem for our democracy.

"Overall, though, opposition MPPs in Ontario have far less power than their counterparts in Ottawa, and they've got less power now than at any other time in living memory."

That has been intentional, and really counter to having a responsible government, I would argue. A responsible government ensures that legislation as it is crafted is inclusive of the people we serve. This is of the lowest bar; this is not a high bar.

When the member from Timmins led off on his comments, he said something that really resonated with me. He said, "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." He warned all of us, including new members and long-standing members, "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.'" In fact, individual members and opposition parties have the right to hold the government to account. Any effort by this government to limit our ability to hold the government to account is disrespecting the very voters who sent us here, the citizens we serve.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that it will not resonate well in the province of Ontario, just as the actions of this government to date have compromised confidence in this Parliament and in the parliamentarians who have been sent here. That is not good for the province of Ontario. It's not good for the economy; it's not good for the environment; it's not good for children or seniors. You name it, Mr. Speaker. We can do better.

I wish this government would reconsider the changes to the standing orders, because limiting our voices is limiting the power that the people of this province have, and that is not good for Ontario.

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

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It is now close to 6 o'clock. Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What's that? I can't hear you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): That means—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): —that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made, pursuant to standing order 38. That means that we have a late show—two of them—which means you are free to go.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

SCHOOL FACILITIES INSTALLATIONS SCOLAIRES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member for Mushkegowuk–James Bay has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Premier. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the parliamentary assistant, in this case, may reply for up to five minutes.

I now turn it over to the member from Mushkegowuk–James Bay.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Last week, I asked a question to the Premier: Is the reduction in the size of Toronto council more important than the closure of St. Andrew's elementary school in Kashechewan for health and safety reasons? We are here because the Premier preferred speaking of Toronto and blaming the previous Liberal government.

1800

Chief Leo Friday declared a state of emergency, a crisis, in closing the elementary school of St. Andrew's in Kashechewan.

The school conditions are so bad that my first impression, when I saw the school, was that it looked more like a war camp than a school. I was expecting a regular school that has been run down or was not good, but, I'm telling you, it's not. It's unit after unit after unit—no playground. It's not even a school. It looked more like a war camp.

When you walk into the school, you smell the humidity. The floors are so warped that the doors lock. They shave the bottom of the doors to be able to close them and open them. They get stuck in the winter because, as you know, water expands, so the doors jam. They have to un-jam the doors to let the kids out to go for lunch or recess.

The fire alarm doesn't work. The fire hydrant doesn't work. Just imagine: If the doors lock or jam and there's a fire, what does that mean? It would be catastrophic to the community—even worse, lost lives.

The gym conditions are just as bad. There are mats all around the gym. Do you know why? Because the nails and the screws are coming out and so the kids don't get injured if they go against the wall. They wear their boots and they wear their winter jackets to play in the gym. We were in the gym, and you could see under the door a half-inch gap. I asked the gym teacher, "What happens in the winter?" She said, "Snow comes in. I shovel the snow outside. I put a yoga mat under the door so snow doesn't come in."

That's the condition of the school. We ask teachers to teach a curriculum in these conditions.

The elementary school is now sharing with high school kids.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On shift.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: On shift; that was my next thing. The high school kids start school now at 1 o'clock until 7 o'clock. They have jobs also. Some of them were saying, "We support our family with these jobs." But elementary kids are going to school at high school, and some of these

elementary kids only go one day a week to school. And we're saying that is all right for Ontario?

Mr. Speaker, where in Ontario is it acceptable that elementary students go to school in these terrible conditions? Tell me. Anywhere else in Ontario, there would be an uproar. Anywhere else, it wouldn't be acceptable, so why is it—and I've said this many times here: out of sight, out of mind. In French it's, "loin des yeux, loin du coeur." Pourquoi? On ne le voit pas. Et ce qu'on ne voit pas ne fait pas mal.

Je peux vous le dire, monsieur le Président, quand il y a une petite fille qui commence l'école, sa première journée d'école, puis que la petite est habillée comme nos enfants, habillée dans son linge d'école que ses parents lui ont acheté, et que la petite a la larme à l'oeil puis elle dit, « Monsieur, je ne peux même pas aller à l'école. C'est ma première journée d'école, et je n'ai pas d'école où aller »—if that don't hit home; it did for me.

So I ask again to the Premier: Is it more important, the size of Toronto council or the closing of St. Andrew's elementary school in Kashechewan?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now the parliamentary assistant to Indigenous affairs has up to five minutes to reply to the member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay.

Mr. Ross Romano: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd first like to say to the member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay, aanii, boozhoo.

[Remarks in Ojibway]

I have a very strong feeling towards our Indigenous partners. I care deeply about the cultural significance and importance to our history, and I care deeply about the issues going on on all of our First Nations reserves. Obviously with my proximity in Sault Ste. Marie, it means a great deal to me. I've had some experiences of my own, not in Kashechewan, although in my time as an assistant crown attorney I had the opportunity to deal with some cases from there. The conditions are bad. Last year, when I was first elected, I travelled into a number of areas within what is now the riding of Kiiwetinoong, throughout a number of communities in that area, and I observed a lot of these similar things that you're referring to here.

There's no doubt this is a very important matter. I support the elementary school students in Kashechewan who are calling on the federal government for a new elementary school. These children, like all children, deserve to have a safe learning environment, one that is productive and one that gives them the opportunity to learn in an appropriate manner, in an appropriate setting.

Education within our reserves, we all understand, is a federal matter. It is the responsibility of the federal government. But we still need to work with our Indigenous partners. We need to work together with the federal government to ensure that they follow and meet their responsibilities.

Last month, when Chief Leo Friday called a state of emergency in his community, he did so in response to the conditions that you have very well laid out, and I appreciate your efforts in that regard. The conditions with

respect to the classrooms—the mould, the water damage—do make them unsafe for youth. It should not be taken for granted and it should be obvious that education is so integral for our youth—for all of our youth—and so important to ensure their development and their success in the future. Every student in every corner of this province needs to have access to quality education in a healthy environment.

For the time being, we know that they are sharing space at a local high school, and we are pleased that the students of Kashechewan are at least able to move forward in their education. We do commend the work of Chief Leo Friday in coming up with a solution, albeit not a perfect one—quite an imperfect one. But we do commend him and that community on their efforts to come up with something innovative to be able to provide a better setting for those students.

In the long term, we know that this is a challenge that is faced by the people of Kashechewan. They are facing yearly flooding of the Albany River. On this issue, we are doing our part, working with Canadian and community leaders not only on emergency evacuations when they come and happen, but on long-term solutions. We're supporting efforts to identify potential lands for the community's relocation. But ultimately it is the federal government that does need to live up to its responsibilities to provide good infrastructure on our First Nation reserves.

While Kashechewan faces particular challenges of its own, this is only one example of challenges faced by reserves across Ontario, particularly when it comes to drinking water. Our government is also concerned with the safety and well-being of our First Nation communities that continue to have boil-water advisories. Two of the communities I visited, Neskantaga and Nibinamik, have those concerns. The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks has been providing engineering and technical support to communities, including conducting on-site assessments of existing—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. I thank the member. Thank you very much.

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): And now, the member from Orléans has in fact given notice of dissatisfaction with an answer to a question given by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. As previously described, the member has up to five minutes to debate the matter and, in this case, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing may reply for up to five minutes.

I now turn it over to the member from Orléans.

1810

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you for this opportunity. Mr. Speaker, I felt as though the minister did not provide an adequate response to my question on a very practical issue today. My question, again, is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and it's regarding the

impact of Toronto's municipal council being reduced to 25 councillors from the current 47 councillors.

In the flurry and chaos that have been the past few weeks, the government has been talking about the efficiency of Toronto city council a lot. That is their stated purpose in reducing the number of councillors from 47 to 25. They've also talked a lot about accountability.

I do not question whether this government has the authority to impose its wishes on the municipality, but whether they have truly considered the practical impacts of their actions.

Speaker, the city of Toronto is a mature, capable and effective government. They are a very practical level of government. They have an array of boards, agencies, commissions and other bodies, like BIAs, to manage and deliver services to residents, to listen to residents and to represent the city. There are 388 of those groups, and every one of those 388 groups requires a city councillor's presence to be able to conduct business—every single one.

As it is today, with 44 councillors, it is a challenge to meet those requirements. The recent three-year consultation process that went into drawing the 47-ward map—a map that this government has just thrown out—considered the workload of councillors when recommending the 47-ward map. The consultation was undertaken because of the concern that the value of a resident's vote may not be equal across all wards if the trend of population growth in the city of Toronto continues.

Councillors have many responsibilities, Mr. Speaker. They must attend city council and committee meetings; sit on the boards of city agencies and corporations; hold or attend community meetings to get input from the public; host or get involved in community events; and help people access city services. Some also chair or are members of the seven standing committees, where much of the work of council is done.

There are many boards of agencies and corporations that govern and manage various city services on behalf of city council. Boards of agencies and corporations include both councillors and members of the public, who contribute their skills and experience to the running of the city.

These responsibilities are mandated to make sure that council is listening to the residents, adequately addressing their needs, and being accountable.

Reducing the number of councillors to 25 will paralyze the municipal government, Mr. Speaker. It is not a Legislature; it is a management board where councillors have responsibilities directly related to the day-to-day operation of government.

If the government wanted to rethink what Toronto council's role should be, where some of the workload could be handed off to city staff, and the impact of fewer councillors on overall governance, then they should have considered what changes would be necessary to make the new system work. But they didn't. They introduced a bill in haste, a bill that cancelled an election that was under way. They said repeatedly that the only change necessary to bring efficiency to the government of the city of

Toronto was fewer councillors. The only thing Toronto needs to unleash efficiency is fewer councillors, they said.

The lack of consideration given to the changes that will be necessary to make the 25-councillor model work and the mocking of anyone who even suggested that change might be required show that this Conservative government does not understand the theory and practice of municipal government. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing's response to my question this morning certainly shows this.

The Premier frequently talks a big game about his time down at the city. I have to say that Mr. Ford only attended 53% of council meetings and attended a shocking 0% of committee meetings in his single term on council.

I ask: Instead of feeling vindicated about a court decision, shouldn't this government be focused on the people that they love so much?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to reiterate how the Better Local Government Act would reach our goal of having a more efficient and streamlined process at Toronto city hall. It requires Toronto, which is Ontario's largest municipality and a major economic engine of both the province and the country, to move away from a dysfunctional council system, a broken system that has difficulty with decision-making, a broken system that gets very little done.

Instead, the goal is an efficient council that deals with the big issues that need to be addressed, such as transit, infrastructure and housing—a council that is able to make prompt decisions about the big issues that really matter to Toronto and to the province.

Restoring order to Toronto city council by reducing the number of councillors is part of our plan to make government more efficient and effective; so is improving voting power in the city of Toronto.

We also want to reduce the wasteful spending of tax dollars. People expect their local governments to run efficiently, and this government believes that the hard-working people of Ontario have every right to expect that. Reducing the size of the city of Toronto council to 25 from 47 councillors, plus the mayor, gives the taxpayers of Toronto a streamlined, more efficient council that is ready to work quickly and put the needs of everyday people first.

Under the Better Local Government Act, the average ward size would be 109,263 people. It's interesting. When you look at the area, the city of Toronto is 630 square kilometres. That would mean that the new system would have 25 square kilometres per councillor. In South Glengarry, where I was mayor, which was 604 square kilometres, with four councillors, it equates to 151 square kilometres per councillor. I know that population is a major issue, but area-wise, you're not talking about major differences across the expressway, and that's what I think we're talking about here.

This is based on the latest census figures. We believe this is a reasonable number. The 25 boundaries align with

the federal and provincial electoral boundaries within Toronto. These boundaries were vetted through a federal commission and have been found to provide effective representation. Twenty-five areas would be familiar to voters; 25 areas have been proven to provide fair and equitable representation at all other levels of government.

Parity of voting power is the most important aspect of effective representation. That is why it is so important that there is parity of voting power in the 2018 election, not just in 2026.

Smaller councils work better. The people of Toronto need to see transit and housing built, and they need to see it now. Infrastructure in Toronto cannot continue to crumble. It urgently needs to be repaired and built. A streamlined city council will be better able to take action. This action is long overdue, Mr. Speaker. The more efficiently municipalities are managed, the better it works for residents.

The current size of Toronto city council hinders decision-making. Debates are time-consuming, inefficient and costly. Forty-four independent councillors, each with their own agenda and outlook, mean deadlock in the city's

decision-making on so many issues that Toronto is facing. Allowing Toronto city council to grow to 47 councillors would make the situation even worse.

The people of Ontario need the city of Toronto to be run effectively and efficiently and to move beyond the endless debates and get things done. So our government is acting quickly to deliver on our promises to improve efficiency and effectiveness at city hall.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, we are focused on putting everyday people and families first, lowering taxes and reducing regulatory burdens. This is another example of how our government is moving swiftly to fulfill our commitment to the people of Ontario, our commitment to restoring accountability and trust, and to reducing the size and cost of government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would like to thank all members for respectful debate this afternoon.

There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1820.

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Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
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Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
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Calandra, Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	
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Cho, Stan (PC)	Willowdale	
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
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Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Des Rosiers, Nathalie (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	
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Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre
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French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
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Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
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Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
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Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
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Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre	
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Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
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Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglington—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
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Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
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Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sherif (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurutan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thamigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakabuski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	
		Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
		Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
		Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts

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COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Wayne Gates
Stan Cho, Jill Dunlop
John Fraser, Wayne Gates
Stephen Lecce, Gila Martow
Jane McKenna, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Lindsey Park, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Timothy Bryan

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Jessica Bell, Lorne Coe
Chris Glover, Christine Hogarth
Logan Kanapathi, Daryl Kramp
Natalia Kusendova, Amarjot Sandhu
Mike Schreiner, Dave Smith
Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Jeremy Roberts, Marit Stiles
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Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

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