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of Ontario



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Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 21 November 2018

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 21 novembre 2018

The House met at 0900.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MAKING ONTARIO OPEN FOR
BUSINESS ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 POUR UN ONTARIO OUVERT
AUX AFFAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 20, 2018, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 47, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, the Labour Relations Act, 1995 and the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009 and make complementary amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 47, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi, la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail et la Loi de 2009 sur l'Ordre des métiers de l'Ontario et l'apprentissage et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: I'll be sharing my time with the member from Don Valley East.

It's a pleasure to have an opportunity to say a few words about Bill 47 here on third reading. I want to basically hit three points with regard to Bill 47.

First is the freezing of the minimum wage at \$14 an hour. We know that affordability is a challenge in this province, and we know that you can't raise a family on a \$14-an-hour minimum wage here in Toronto or most other places. The purpose in elevating the minimum wage was to play a bit of catch-up. Arguably, people could say that \$15 was not enough. But the reality is, it simply was a reflection of the fact that we need to make sure that people can do the kinds of things for their families and themselves that most of us take for granted. Some of those things are very simple. So I think the government's freezing of the minimum wage was the wrong thing to do. We know that minimum wage earners won't ever be able to catch up.

We also know that the government's argument that the minimum wage is killing jobs just doesn't hold water, that year-over-year increases in jobs in Ontario—in the last year, it has been 85,000 new jobs, most of those full-time. We know there is some movement towards full-time jobs in the economy. That's a good thing; that's a good thing for people. People need stability in their income.

I believe very strongly that the government's approach to minimum wage was wrong. It was unfair, and it's not

going to lead to greater economic growth. It's very clear right now that the government is trying to say that it's destroying jobs when, in fact, it's creating jobs.

The second thing is the elimination of two paid sick days. I think all of us here don't have a limit on our paid sick days. I don't think we do. So I think it's a bit rich for us to say that people can't have two—it's 2018, for crying out loud. It's 2018. We're talking about the most vulnerable workers. The reason that we set a floor, that we create labour law, is so that people can have things like weekends, right? How did we get a weekend? Because we created the law—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank the labour movement.

Mr. John Fraser: There we go. And I will, 100%.

How do we get maximum standards for hours of work? How do we get standards for working conditions? How do we get standards for worker safety? That's why we set those things. We set minimum standards because we know that sometimes there's a power imbalance between employers and employees, and we must set a minimum standard. Two paid sick days is a minimum standard. It's a minimum standard in the 21st century.

To me, it's unbelievable that a group of people who have unlimited sick days would say to the rest of Ontarians, to the most vulnerable workers in this province, "No, you can't have that, but we're going to have what we're going to have." And then stand up four or five times in question period to say, "We feel really good about freezing your wages and eliminating your two paid sick days, and I've got as many as I need." I think it's pretty rich.

The third thing is the whole idea of being able to change someone's shift with almost no notice. We know that people have costs for things like child care, we know that people have costs for things like transportation, and that it's unfair that the employer would, at very short notice, say to people, "Well, I'm going to decrease your income, but your costs are going to remain the same."

Speaker, there are many more things I know my colleague from Don Valley East is going to speak about. Bill 47 is wrong. The government should not have moved to repeal Bill 148. It's wrong. It's bad for Ontario workers, and it's bad for Ontario families. I urge all members of this House to vote against it.

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

Mr. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank my colleague, John Fraser, the member for Ottawa South and our leader here in the Legislature for the Ontario Liberal Party. This bill that we're debating here today is, I believe, a bill that does not support the vast majority of people here in this province.

Many of our families in this Legislature came here a generation, two generations or three generations ago. I know many of those families have an immigrant past, and many people who did come to Ontario, who chose Ontario to reside in, came because it was a place where there was fairness. We knew it was a place where if you wanted to pursue an education and you worked hard, you could get an education and you could move from one economic class to the next with ease, if you worked hard. We knew it was a place where if you wanted to start a family and raise a family, you could go and save some money, send the kids to school and get a down payment for a home, purchase a home and start a family. We knew it was a place, and it still is, where if you were ill, you could go into the doctor's office and to the hospital and get services.

But something has changed in the last maybe 20 years in this province, and it's about the opportunity that people have, the ability to work hard and to move from one socio-economic class to another here in this province of Ontario. We know this is a phenomenon that's happening internationally, where there's a concentration of wealth in the 1%. In fact, over the last decade, that separation and that increase of the 1% has increased by 42%.

We know now, internationally—and Canada is not immune to this—that around the world, 1% of the population of this entire planet controls half of the wealth. I'm going to say that one more time, because it's a startling fact: 1% of the entire population of the planet controls over half of the wealth of this planet. Canada, over the last few decades, has been moving towards this trend as well.

We're not here, as Ontario Liberals, to say that this should be an attack on business. This is not an attack on business. This is about creating an environment where people have the opportunity to provide for themselves.

0910

When we went out there and we consulted Ontarians, including businesses, figuring out what would better position Ontarians for success—meaning, how would we build a better economy here in Ontario, and how would we reposition this great province to take on the challenges of hyper-globalization over the next few decades?

The last time I spoke on this bill, I talked about the third industrial revolution that's taking place internationally with the reforms that are taking place in energy, that are taking place in manufacturing through automation. We're seeing changes in the way people communicate. A change is taking place. That's why we need to make sure that people have an opportunity to position themselves for success, to take on the challenges of this new economy that's coming forward.

I think it's going backwards to remove two sick days that we put in place. We know that if you are sick, it's better that you stay home than come in to the workplace and get everyone else sick. It doesn't really work out. Economists will tell you this; professors who study this type of stuff—and the labour—will tell you this. Professionals will tell you that if you're sick, you should not be in the workplace.

But we also know that if you are going to miss work—we put in place a two-day sick leave where you got paid,

and you can still receive some benefits, and you could take care of the bills. It's getting tough out there. I know that in all of our communities—I represent the Don Mills community, where there is poverty, but in all of our communities across this great province, there are issues around poverty.

When I said that something is changing in this province—the fact is that if you work hard and you cannot save enough money to take care of your future, that's a problem. If you work hard, full-time, in this province and you don't have enough money to pay for your children to go to a field trip or an extracurricular event, that's a problem in Ontario. It rips away at the fabric of what makes this place such a great destination for newcomers but also for third, fourth and fifth generations, sometimes hundreds of generations. I know that we have our Indigenous families here in Ontario as well. You could be here for one generation, or it could be thousands of years as well, but we still are all part of this great province, and if we work hard, we should be able to reap the benefits of that hard work. But something has changed.

In the city of Toronto, which is my city, we know that the average rent is around \$2,500 for a one-bedroom. I brought this up last time, and some member said, "Well, you can find a place for \$1,500." That's true, but the average rent in this city is \$2,500. If you work for minimum wage here in the province of Ontario today, you get roughly around \$24,000 or \$25,000. It just doesn't add up anymore. It just does not add up.

It is our responsibility that if there is one segment of society that seems to be increasing their wealth year after year after year—these are our business owners. They have a responsibility, being in this province, being owners of these great businesses, being industrialists, people who can actually, with one decision, change the landscape—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Coteau: One of the members here is telling me that I should go sit over with the NDP. This is not an NDP issue; this is about decency. This is about decency. This is about making sure that if you work hard in this province, you're rewarded for your hard work. Imagine going to work for 40 hours and not being able to pay the bills. That's what's happening in this city as wealth increases.

Let's remember that our economy has grown drastically over the last 10 years. There is more wealth in this city and in this province than ever before. General revenues in government have increased. They've almost doubled in the last 15 years; in fact, they have. So things are happening here. We've seen the development of new industries here in the province of Ontario. There is wealth coming into this province, and anyone who tells you that this city and this province are not doing well is actually misleading you, Mr. Speaker.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I said "anyone," not necessarily you, John, but anyone. It doesn't have to be a member in this Legislature. But if anyone tells you out in the public that we're not doing well as a province, it's misleading,

because we are doing exceptionally well, and we've done well with most job creation.

But my point is this: When there is money coming into this province, when there is an economic divide that's taking place that's increasing year after year after year—internationally, like I said, a 42% increase in the last decade and 1% of the population controlling half of the wealth—that's a problem. If anyone out there says that that's not an issue, they are misleading you as well, Mr. Speaker.

I think that we need to make sure, at the end of the day, that we as MPPs do what we can to ensure that the economy here in Ontario is set up for success for everyone, not just a few. You know, smart business leaders will say the same thing, because if the majority of people don't have the opportunity to get out there, work hard, and have their hard work paid off, it actually affects not only them in their home; it affects the local businesses around them, but it also affects big business. It's just common sense.

So, for the Conservative Party here in Ontario to rip away from the resources of people who work hard and actually lower that minimum wage that was scheduled to come in place January 1, and instead give a tax break to the richest Ontarians in the amount of \$275 million—it tells me something very simple, Mr. Speaker: That when they say they're here for the people, it's only a certain group of people that they're here for.

Mr. Jeff Burch: A very small group.

Mr. Michael Coteau: A very small group of people here in Ontario.

And I don't want to be the politician who is in this House trying to divide people up, because I think we need our businesses. We need our business leaders. But what we also need, Mr. Speaker, is we need to work together to ensure that people who work hard in this province have the opportunity to have their hard work pay off. What the Conservative government here in this province has done is actually the opposite of that.

Again, if two sick days is too much for that party to stomach, then they do not have the interest of the people of Ontario at hand. Because if two days is too much, then they are not here for the people of the province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? There being no further debate, pursuant to the order of the House dated November 12, 2018, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Smith, Bay of Quinte, has moved third reading of Bill 47, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, the Labour Relations Act, 1995 and the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009 and make complementary amendments to other Acts.

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

I heard a no.

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Third reading vote deferred.

RESTORING TRUST, TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 VISANT À RÉTABLIR LA CONFIANCE, LA TRANSPARENCE ET LA RESPONSABILITÉ

Mr. Fedeli moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 57, An Act to enact, amend and repeal various statutes / Projet de loi 57, Loi édictant, modifiant et abrogeant diverses lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Fedeli?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I am here to speak about A Plan for the People. This is the fall economic statement that we tabled here in the Legislature last Thursday. I'm looking forward, as I'm sure everybody in the House is, to the next hour of riveting activity here.

0920

I'll parse this out in several packages, but I do want to talk for an hour about the 2018 economic outlook and fiscal review, the fall economic statement. We refer to it as FES—F-E-S. In it will be details of the province's economic outlook and fiscal plan. This will be the Ontario strategy for making Ontario open for business, and it will include the government's plan for respecting consumers and families.

Speaker, if I can highlight it, it breaks out into three different segments. One is restoring trust, transparency and accountability, long missing in this Legislature. It will be a new fiscal blueprint for the province that puts the taxpayer at the centre of government decision-making. It is a new approach for public finances that will serve three important objectives that will restore fiscal balance: It will reduce our debt burden and it will strengthen accountability and transparency. The government will reinvent the way government operates and delivers services to the people to ensure value for money and outcomes. These are the important components of restoring trust, transparency, and accountability.

The second of the three plans is making Ontario open for business. Our government for the people is creating an open-for-business environment that will bring prosperity back to Ontario. The government for the people is committed to once again making Ontario a premier destination for job creation, for investment, for entrepreneurship and for growth. The province is cutting red tape. I'll talk a lot about that, Speaker, in the hour. We're cutting red tape and we're lowering costs for businesses, helping key sectors like mining and forestry and regions like my beloved northern Ontario grow and create more jobs. Speaker, that is our second one: making Ontario open for business.

The third and final component of our plan for the people is respecting consumers and families. The government is putting more money in people's pockets by introducing, as I'll discuss in great detail, our LIFT program—Low-income Individuals and Families Tax Credit.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Lift everyone up.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: We are going to, indeed, as the Treasury Board president said, lift everyone up. In fact, as

you'll see, it's 1.1 million people in the province of Ontario.

We're making life more affordable through cancelling the cap-and-trade carbon tax and doing—every kind of tax increase that was planned has been cancelled, including fishing licences and driver's fees, as we'll talk about.

The government is keeping our promise to end hallway health care by adding new long-term beds all across Ontario. I'll talk in detail about that.

We're increasing the housing supply.

We're ensuring that law-abiding individuals and families are protected from drug, gun and gang-related violence.

That is really the plan.

I'll get into many more details, Speaker, but in a nutshell, in brief, we have saved the people of Ontario, through finding efficiencies, \$3.2 billion in expenses to date. We just got elected on June 7. Our government was formed on June 29. In these very few months, we have saved the people of Ontario, through expense savings of \$3.2 billion, and we did two things. We returned \$2.7 billion in tax relief right back into the pockets of Ontario individuals, families and businesses. That leaves \$500 million to deduct from the Liberal legacy of a \$15-billion deficit that they left the people of Ontario. In the 11 weeks since we did our review, we have shaved \$500 million off of that Liberal legacy and returned \$2.7 billion into the pockets of people.

We will develop a debt-reduction strategy. We'll set appropriate targets in an appropriate timeline to reduce our deficit, our debt, and what we call our net debt-to-GDP—the amount of debt we have compared to the growth in the province of Ontario—which is beyond what the Liberals called that “red line that should never be crossed” that they crossed. We're going to be bringing it back down. Then we will be doing an ongoing review of programs. This will continue and it will ensure that these various reviews provide absolute benefits to the people of the province of Ontario. That is it in a nutshell.

Now, when we talk about restoring trust, transparency and accountability, I'm going to take a run through the numbers, because it is so very, very important that the people of Ontario and the new members in the Legislature fully understand the breadth and depth of the Liberal numbers and the deficit they left. So if you just think about net debt for a second—actually, I'll get to that in a moment. What I'll talk about is what we inherited.

The Liberals claimed last year to have balanced the budget. In fact, they said they had a \$600-million surplus and patted themselves on the back. Well, the Auditor General would not sign off on that. In fact, in the Legislature, she termed their accounting and their numbers to be “bogus.” In fact, she had about five or six different descriptions for the Liberal words.

But if you can imagine—this is the Auditor General. The province of Ontario as a corporation, for instance: Could you imagine a publicly traded company having their auditor go out in front of a camera and say, “I'm sorry, this company's numbers are bogus”? Well, you can imagine

what would happen and who would be the next call that would be made if it was a company listed on the stock exchange. But here, the people of Ontario are the shareholders. We own this. We own this debt. We own this deficit. It falls to us to fix this Liberal disaster.

When they said they had a \$600-million surplus, it was bogus, according to the Auditor General. The true number that has been identified through the Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry is a \$3.7-billion deficit that the Liberals had in 2017. They never did reach balance, as they claimed they did. They never did. We always knew they were ginning up the numbers by using one-time revenue to get their revenue numbers higher. We're talking about things like the sale of their General Motors shares, the sale of Hydro One, the sale of the building across the street—the OPG, Ontario Power Generation building—or the sale of the LCBO warehouse. We are talking about not even hundreds of millions of dollars, Speaker; we are talking about billions of dollars.

In fact, last year alone, if you look at the revenue chart from the day the Liberals took office, the revenue has increased in the province of Ontario from the growth in some businesses. Except, the last chunk of years was all based on one-time revenue, either equalization payments from the federal government—because we became a have-not province under the Liberal government—or it was from the sale of assets, one-time sale of assets. Last year, it was almost \$6 billion.

0930

Now, you think about our budget of around \$148 billion, \$150 billion—\$6 billion of that was just from the sale of one-time assets. It's not going to happen this year. There's nothing left to sell. It was like burning the furniture to heat your house. Eventually, the furniture runs out and you have nothing left to heat the house with. That's exactly what they did year after year and, in order to feed that addiction, it had to get bigger and bigger and bigger. So last year there was over \$6 billion in one-time sales. Even with that, even with putting \$6 billion that was never going to happen again—I couldn't imagine what they would have tried to do this year, what they would have ended up doing—they still had a deficit of \$3.7 billion, when they said they had balanced.

But then they had to fess up—a little bit anyway—and they kind of did an, “Aw, shucks. Next year, we aren't going to be balanced. We're going to have a deficit of \$6.7 billion.” That actually was only a half-truth. That almost \$7 billion is a little bit shy of what the financial commission of inquiry proved is actually a \$15-billion deficit—a \$15-billion hole that was left. This is not just in new programs.

I know some of the opponents to the plan for the people would say, “You've concocted a \$15-billion deficit only to bring it down in the fall economic statement because, well, the Liberals said they had a \$6.7-billion deficit. You're going to cancel all those programs so, therefore, you've got to take that \$7 billion away. You're going to look like heroes on your fall economic statement. You're going to save \$7 billion.” That just tells me they don't understand simple math here.

That \$6.7 billion was not in new programs; that was a structural deficit. Those are to pay doctors, teachers and front-line workers. That's what that is. If you look in their own budget and read it carefully, you will see that that \$6.7 billion was repeating, almost entirely, for the next four years, but their new programs that they announced didn't actually kick in until the end of year three and year four. That \$6.7 million was to pay the bills. That's to pay the bills that are coming in every day. That's what we call a structural deficit. That's just operating expenses. For the most part, it wasn't for anything new.

So you add to that the change in the economy which—their number of revenue is higher than the economists' number, so you have to add about another \$1.5 billion on to that deficit because that revenue is not going to show up.

I used to quote the page number, page 144 or something along that line, in the budget every day when I stood up as finance critic and said, "You've got a line in here that's \$1.4 billion in efficiencies that you're going to find," but they never lifted a finger to find even one efficiency, not one penny in efficiencies. So how can you book \$1.4 billion in efficiencies? That had to come out.

Then there was the difference between what they put for pensions and reality, and what they put for the Fair Hydro Plan and what was first exposed by us, then the Auditor General, then the Financial Accountability Officer, who said, "Hang on a second. You are taking all the bills of this Fair Hydro Plan away from the government's books and hiding it over on the Ontario Power Generation's books. You can't do that. That's real money. That's the taxpayers' money. You have to show that on the province's books." So that's \$5 billion.

There's about \$300 million that we're adjusting back in the reserve. We're putting that back in. They were using some of the reserve money to balance their budget out. That's \$15 billion. That's how we get to \$15 billion.

The Auditor General, a couple of months ago now, signed off on the books, the \$3.7-billion deficit, for the first time in three years. Now could you imagine, again, if you were a public company and your own auditor would not fully sign off on your books? That happened three years ago, and it happened two years ago—she gave what's called a "qualified opinion." This year we had a clean opinion, the first time in Ontario's last three years that we were able to have a clean opinion.

She gave a qualified opinion for the first time in Ontario's history, which was unprecedented. Then all of a sudden, the second year—now, you're talking about being unprecedented. How do you get two in a row? They were in line not just for a qualified opinion, but the auditor told them, "If you do not properly account for that hydro mess that you got us into, we will give you an adverse opinion." That's as black a mark—or as red a mark, I guess, in accounting terms—as you could ever possibly have.

So we have come in, and we have accepted these numbers from the financial commission of inquiry. We have accepted the Auditor General's understanding of the pension and the hydro mess.

One thing that the auditor told us was stunning, and I think we're learning it through the select committee, where we're investigating these improprieties, I'm going to suggest. Speaker, the Auditor General told us that the Liberal government knew that taking the debt on this hydro and putting it across the street on somebody else's books not only was wrong, but it would cost \$4 billion more to do that, because the interest rates that they pay on these massive numbers of billions of dollars that they were borrowing is far higher than our interest rate that the province pays. Even though the Liberal government knew that this was going to hurt families, by spending \$4 billion just to move it across the street so that it didn't show up on their books—that's how egregious they were. That tells us the true breadth and depth that the Liberal government went to, to try to appear that they were balancing their budget.

I congratulate all members of the select committee, who are digging deep and shining a light on what the Liberal government did. They're shining a light right now. We're hearing things coming out of that committee, where the Liberal government knew that they could, instead of spending that \$4 billion—do you know how many knee replacements you can do, how many hip replacements you can do? They knew they were giving all of that up just to be able to try to artificially balance the budget.

So that sets the stage for the \$15-billion fiasco, the \$15 billion that we have inherited as a deficit.

I look at the young people who are here today, and I think about the debt that you are inheriting, and it saddens me. Back in 1990, the net debt per person was \$3,733. It grew to, today, the net debt per person—even when the recession came, the net debt per person was \$13,163. From there, we've had 10 years of growth worldwide, 10 great years that we could have taken advantage of and brought that net debt per person back down. Instead, our debt rose to \$338 billion today. It will rise to \$347 billion in our book when we're finished the year. Our net debt per person—the young people I'm looking at in the gallery right now, Speaker, each owe—I don't know if you know this. You owe \$24,231 right now. You owe that money right now, in debt. That's your share of debt. That is really unfortunate, that you have accumulated that debt. So we will talk to you about our plan.

Speaker, when you think about where we were when the Liberal government took over—we can go back to the days when the NDP took over. Do you know that our entire debt in Ontario was under \$40 billion, back when the NDP took over? They very quickly added \$60 billion. They added 150%—they grew our debt by. That is exactly what happened. You can imagine, Speaker, the shock to the system, to know that you go from under \$40 billion to over \$100 billion in debt. Well, the Liberal government took it from there. They showed them the amateurs that they are. They showed them that you can take \$170 billion in debt back in the recession—actually, when they took over it was about \$140 billion in debt—but in the recession it was \$170 billion in debt. It was the wake-up call. We should have stopped right then. Instead, today, the Liberals

showed the NDP that they were amateurs in adding to debt. The Liberals added almost \$200 billion in debt.

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The interest on debt alone is almost \$900—just the interest—for every woman, man, and child in Ontario. In fact, in the 20 minutes that I have been speaking, we have already spent almost \$500,000 in interest. That's what it is. It's \$1.4 million every hour. That's the cheque we write. We can't write the cheques fast enough just to pay the interest. That's the issue that we have.

I know the NDP like to laugh about debt and how much it hurts families. I know they understand that and they love to laugh at that. But the issue with that is that this is exactly what's hurting the people of Ontario, and we have a plan to get out of this mess.

Speaker, we have outlined the savings we've had already: \$3.2 billion in savings have been achieved in the few short weeks we've been here. This includes not one job loss. This includes no changes to front-line service and not one tax increase. That is exactly what's happened so far—absolutely.

Speaker, when you think about \$3.2 billion in only a few short weeks—and what did we do? We turned \$2.7 billion of that money back into the pockets of the people of Ontario. That is how we're turning Ontario around. That is our plan for the people of Ontario.

That's a rough outline of what we've done to date. Now I want to talk about what we've done, and what we will be doing, to make Ontario open for business, because this is going to be the key to turning the province of Ontario around.

I was born in the city of North Bay. I grew up in northern Ontario. At a very young age, 16, I was able to open my first business. Just after I turned 20, I opened my first corporation. We did business all over the world, Speaker. These were the days when Ontario was the economic engine of Canada and, quite frankly, my beloved northern Ontario was the fuel for that economic engine. That's the Ontario that we grew up in. Those were the days when you could open a business, make a life for yourself, hire employees, do well in Ontario, and make sure everybody who worked with you did well. Speaker, those days left us in the darkness of the Liberals.

Ontario's economic growth has been slower than the rest of Canada for the past 15 years under the Liberal government. Ontario's position as Canada's economic engine has been continually eroding. Our government's goal is to make Ontario the premier economic destination for jobs, investment and entrepreneurship. We're committed to creating the right environment to making Ontario open for business again.

Speaker, I look, like everybody else does, at some of the things that are happening south of the border. You can talk about it all you want. At the end of the day, on the business aspect—maybe how they get there is a bit different, but the results on the business side are speaking for themselves. I'm looking at a chart here on our corporate tax competitiveness. At one time, we here in Canada, and especially here in Ontario, had a big advantage over

American manufacturers, over US manufacturers, because we had a lower tax rate. We had a robust energy sector, and lately, Speaker—I'll use our business expression: They've been eating our lunch. They dropped their corporate tax rate so immensely that it put a chill on Ontario businesses that we need to turn around.

One of the things that they also did is, they accelerated their capital cost depreciation. That's a technical term, but what that means is, when you go out and buy a piece of equipment, you can write it off almost in-year. This is what happens. You're able to write that equipment off, so you're incentivized to open your business in the States, because we don't have that in Canada. We don't have that in Ontario. So we wrote to the federal government in the middle of September and said, "When you come out with your fall economic statement, please consider allowing in-year depreciation of capital costs. We've got to mirror what they're doing in the States."

Yesterday, our Premier, Doug Ford, stood and said to the Prime Minister and to finance minister Bill Morneau: "Tomorrow"—which is now today—"when you come out with your fall economic statement, please do something about accelerating the capital cost allowance." This is huge. This is the day where this has to happen—all in, today, Speaker. This is so tremendously important. If they're not going to match tax competitiveness, then they at least need to give the people of Canada and allow the people of Ontario that room to be able to thrive in our manufacturing sector.

When you look at our package of what we want to do—and I'll talk a little bit more about it in a moment—we need to become competitive in our taxes. That's why our Premier, Doug Ford, has said that in our plan for the people we will be lowering corporate taxes from 11.5% to 10.5%. That's coming, Speaker. We will be lowering hydro rates by 12%. That's coming, Speaker. And we need to make Ontario open for business by cutting red tape. That is one advantage that we can have.

The single biggest thing that we have done for families and for businesses is cancelling the cap-and-trade carbon tax. That saves businesses \$880 million in 2019. I can tell you, as a small business person, a lifelong entrepreneur, it's access to capital. The moment we, as business people, have 10 cents in our hand, we invest it back in our business. I can tell you that, Speaker, as somebody who has been in business all my life, the moment that you have capital—because we fight for capital all the time; we fight to get that money—we reinvest it in our business. We hire more people. That's what the business community does. That's what we do.

Look at one of the things that we've done: We cut the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board premiums, saving employers \$1.45 billion in 2019. That is the kind of incentive that businesses need. You can see the chill in Ontario is being lifted. You can see it. You can feel it. When we hold round tables throughout the province, whether it's in Cornwall or Kenora, you know. You feel the difference in the business community.

I did a speech at the Canadian Club on Friday. There were 500-plus people there—a sold-out crowd. You can

feel it. You can feel it through the applause. You can just see the heads nodding as we talked about, “Here’s how we’re going to turn Ontario around. Here’s how we’re going to create jobs. Here’s how we’re going to put people back to work.”

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You can just feel the difference already. The people in Ontario understand. We’re back. We’re coming back. We’re open for business. Our Premier is putting the signs up at the borders to proudly proclaim, “Open for Business,” because Ontario is open for business. We are going to continue.

When I talk about red tape—it’s interesting. I was in Sarnia a few weeks ago. I’m going to tell my snake story today. I don’t know if everybody has heard the snake story. The snake story is a good one. I was in Sarnia a few weeks ago and there was a person who purchased—

Interjection.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I realize that you’re not interested in knowing how business is going to help grow the province. I can understand that.

So let me talk about this, Speaker. There’s a family that purchased a large piece of property—

Miss Monique Taylor: There are enough snakes around here.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Do you want to repeat that?

Interjections.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Do you want to repeat it again?

Miss Monique Taylor: Would you like to finish your story?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Am I permitted to?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock, please. Look, we have respectful debate going on here, and I expect respect from all members in here. When I don’t get respect, then I will certainly stand and I’ll make a general statement first, but you don’t want me centring you out. So let’s go back. Let’s keep debate respectful.

I’ll turn it back now to the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker.

The family bought a large tract of land and sold a piece of it to, actually, the casino that was built in Sarnia. The property around the casino they planned to develop—whether it’s hotels or a \$100-million development; whatever the project is, I won’t give the details—but it’s been five years now. For five years they were not able to proceed. Why? Because 21 Butler’s garter snakes were found on the site. These Butler’s garter snakes—I could tell you a hundred stories about the Blanding’s turtles in North Bay that have held up developments.

I could tell you all of those stories, but I’ll settle in on the snake story, because for five years now, this mega-project has been stalled. It will not proceed because of these 21 Butler’s garter snakes. The family has spent five years and \$30,000 per snake—\$630,000 the family has been forced to spend on snake studies. This is the kind of thing that we need to stop in Ontario. We need to be able to work.

I can tell you another story. In North Bay, there’s a developer building a subdivision. There’s a road that goes

through and the Blanding’s turtle is there. They were asked to spend several hundreds of thousands of dollars on a culverts system, which they’ve done, an underpass for the turtle. Before the election, they were looking to now have the underpass culverts system illuminated.

This is the kind of red tape that we need to cut in the province of Ontario. We have 331,000 statutes in Ontario. We have 380,000 pieces of red tape in Ontario. When former Premier Gordon Campbell was here to do the great work he did on the financial commission of inquiry, we talked about red tape. He said, “You know, in BC, we have 200,000 pieces of red tape.” Think about it: They have half the red tape that we do in Ontario. I’ll tell you, BC looks like a pretty safe and pretty nice place to live, and with half of our red tape.

We intend, we have announced, that we will cut red tape by 25% by the year 2022. This will make Ontario open for business. This will lower costs and lower administrative costs, and will lower the administrative burden on businesses. We will continue to protect Ontario’s interests through international and interprovincial trade agreements. We’re also going to be promoting growth in our forestry sector. Under the Liberals, we saw 80% of the lumber mills close in northern Ontario. Most will never reopen: They’re dismantled; they’re gone. We lost tens of thousands of jobs throughout Ontario’s north.

I’ll give you another red-tape story. Frank Dottori, one of the founders of Tembec—a very glorious northern Ontario and Quebec company; they still have mills throughout the north—retired from there. He says he bumped his head and opened another mill on his own. He talks about red tape. He came to the all-party committee; I can’t recall if it was in northwestern Ontario or in Sudbury. He travelled to our committee. He joined Jamie Lim, who is the president of the Ontario Forest Industries Association. They both talked to us about the red tape, and they talked to us again about the turtle.

We all want to see the turtles protected—there’s no hesitation to comment on that, Speaker—but it’s how it is being done. Right now, logging roads are shut down, completely shut down, for some weeks every year to allow the turtles to cross. There has to be a better way, because what happens is, everybody’s laid off. There are thousands of people. So you don’t have a trucker; loggers can’t go in and log; there’s no way to get the material out; and there is no way to get the material to the mills to make paper or to make pulp or to make wood. Everything basically comes to a standstill for a period of time. This is red tape. This is what happens.

This is what happens when you dream up things like the Far North Act, that cuts off half of northern Ontario from logging and from mining, or from exploring. This is what happens when you have a Species at Risk Act that imposes this kind of micro-attention on a road, that shuts down employment for thousands of people.

We have to protect the species—there’s no hesitation to say that, Speaker—but it has got to be in an opportunity to protect the tens of thousands of jobs in northern Ontario as well. There has to be some sensibility brought to this.

This government will continue to create a pro-business environment that has been missing for so many years—more than a decade, Speaker. We will review the effectiveness of all of our business support systems, however; that will be something that you will see. But we will continue to attract further investment by enhancing confidence and competitiveness in our capital markets and in our business community.

When you are a young person looking for a job, or if you are a manufacturer looking for an employee, there is a disconnect; they don't line up. They don't line up at all. Dr. Miner wrote a great book some years ago called *People Without Jobs, Jobs Without People*, because we have unemployment and because we have manufacturers thirsting for employees and that can't find them.

I'll give you a couple of examples. I'll go back to Tembec again. Tembec, that popular company that I talked about, is actually now called Rayonier. They were bought, so I'll refer to them by their new name, Rayonier. I met with the president here in Toronto about three weeks ago, and he said, "Vic, I need your help."

Témiscaming, Quebec, is about a 45-minute drive from North Bay. North Bay is very close to the Quebec border. He said, "In Témiscaming, we need today—right now, today—35 skilled trades workers, and we can't find one. We cannot find a single employee, a labourer, to take these jobs." It's a great-paying job; they just cannot find skilled labourers.

He said, "In our paper plant in Kapuskasing, the plant in Cochrane, the plant in Hearst, we need 50 people immediately. We need 50 employees; we cannot find one."

Two weeks ago, the last time I was home, I was very pleased to present Northern Ontario Heritage Fund grants to some tourism groups, one of the arts groups and a couple of our manufacturers. It was interesting: The media was interviewing the tourism group and they talked about the bicycle trails that we're going to be building and how it's going to help in our tourism. And the Capitol Centre, as it's called, was talking about how this will enhance their arts programs. Then the manufacturer got up—I think it was about a \$438,000 grant to buy some new equipment—and he said, "This is great. We need this new equipment. We're going to put people to work. But," he said, "I can't find the people." He said, "This is our biggest single problem." Here he is with a manufacturing plant in North Bay and he cannot find the skilled workers.

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So I started talking with our mining community. I recall a story—it was some time ago now—where one of the mining companies needed welders. They went to Tunisia and brought 12 welders home because they could not find a welder. It's so apparent that there is a mismatch from what we're teaching our kids and the jobs that are required. It's backwards, Speaker. It's absolutely wrong, what's happening.

We find out, of course, that a big part of the problem in our skilled trades is the fact that the apprentice ratios were completely reversed as well, absolutely reversed. Think about a physician in a hospital doing rounds with about

six, seven or eight doctors in training with them—residents. That's one doctor to a handful of residents. In the trades sector, it's been reversed for far too long, where you need three or four journeymen, as they're called, for one apprentice. What kind of math is that? This is backwards. This is one of these Conservative things that I've just been railing on for years, that that makes no sense. When sitting on that side, we stood up and talked about how it made no sense. It made no sense when I ran in 2011, it made no sense when I ran in 2014, and it still makes no sense. There is evidence of that, that it makes no sense, in 2018, so we are dissolving the College of Trades, Speaker.

We are going to ensure that the right supports are there to maintain a strong and highly skilled workforce in Ontario. I look forward to working with the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities in training the students that we need today for those jobs that are already here and are not being filled.

Our mayor in the city of North Bay, Al McDonald, likes to talk about, very frequently, the statistics that our local employment group puts out monthly. Some 420 jobs in North Bay have gone unfilled again this month. There are, again, people without jobs, because we have high unemployment, and jobs without people, because they are being trained in the wrong fields. We've got to make that match, and that is exactly what's going to be happening.

Employment growth happens very differently in the province of Ontario. From 2003 to 2017, employment in the GTA is up by almost 650,000. In central Ontario, it's up about 205,000. In eastern Ontario, it's up about 85,000. In the southwest, it just about flatlined; it barely moved up at all. In 14 years, Speaker, the employment growth in the southwest hasn't moved. But sadly, in northern Ontario, it's down almost 25,000. That's what is happening in the north. It's very different. So when you are in a building in Toronto and all you can see around you—just go out on University Avenue, right out here, and look up and do a 360. It's cranes everywhere. I like to bring cabinet ministers to North Bay to talk. We have round tables. I had Minister Caroline Mulroney there recently, as well as others. I think MPP Ross Romano was up quite recently. I always say to them, "Let's meet in my office to start with. We'll just meet down there. It's central. It's on Main Street." I do it for a purpose, Speaker. I say, "Come to my office," not because it's just the central place and we can meet up there instead of meeting at Syl's kitchen diner, that Ross and I met at, or Burger World, one of my favourite breakfast places, or the gas station in Callander—I like to have my breakfast there as well.

I say, "Let's meet at my office," instead because when they look at my office and they look on either side of my office, there are five—this is on Main Street—boarded-up buildings on either side of me, on Main Street. If you look across the street, it's boarded-up as well. We're in there. We moved in there to try to bring some attention to the area. We're hoping to have one of our health facilities open in one of those boarded-up places in a few short months, Speaker. I hope to make that announcement soon. We're trying to do this. Speaker, I bring them there, because I want them, especially the cabinet ministers and

the MPPs who have not seen the north, to know. Looking around here, in the bubble of Toronto, and seeing cranes everywhere and people fighting because—everybody has a job, 650,000 new. In the north, where I live, it's very, very different. It's a very different Ontario, a very different province of Ontario.

Because of that, Speaker, we are going to put supports in place to support northern Ontario. I talked about it earlier. I made reference to the Far North Act. This was a bill brought in before I was elected in 2011. I was mayor of North Bay, and I remember shaking my head, thinking, "Wow." The Far North Act, it was called—no consultation with First Nations, no consultation with municipalities and mayors, such as myself at the time. It was just arbitrary. It was ideology, Liberal ideology: "We're going to cut off northern Ontario. We don't want anybody touching anything in the north." I don't know how they thought they were going to get the wood to build these desks or the ore to make steel. I don't know what they thought they were doing, but they just cut off half of northern Ontario.

Think about this for a second. I'll talk about the Ring of Fire in a moment. The Ring of Fire, if it was not discovered when it was, would never be discovered. We are talking about cutting off exploration. North Bay is the world headquarters for exploration, so you can imagine what it did to our economy. When we make exploration products, when we have mining and engineering firms—two of the best in the world are in North Bay, with hundreds of employees each. We have 12 mining and manufacturing companies that build exploration products. So when you've got a Liberal government that cut off exploration in the north, cut off logging industry in half the north—our fall economic statement includes reviewing the Far North Act. We're going to open that up and begin to understand what we can do to bring back the glory days in northern Ontario. That's one of the first pieces.

We will establish a special mining working group to be able to kick-start—when the Liberals took office, Ontario was the number one mining jurisdiction in the world. Today, we've fallen—I think the number is 28th today. It changes annually, and I haven't been involved in that. Quite frankly, it's so upsetting to look it up. We have fallen way down. We're no longer number one. We're not number 10. We're not even considered. This is why we will put in this special mining working group.

To help the municipalities and the First Nations, we will introduce revenue sharing for forestry, mining and aggregates from the province of Ontario. What that means—I think about Sudbury, where the mine is on one end of town and the smelter is on the other. The trucks get loaded up, they roar down and they rip up the streets. They put the ore in the smelter—the nickel, in Sudbury's case. The province gets all the money, and Sudbury's municipality gets all the bills. There's never anything fair about that. So it will be resource revenue sharing.

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With respect to the Ring of Fire, we will be addressing the delays of the Ring of Fire. It's been 10 years. I was at the announcement, and I remember one of the Liberal

ministers coming to North Bay and talking about the Ring of Fire. "Really, this Ring of Fire"—it was fascinating. It was more than 10 years ago now.

The next year they're back, and they're saying, "We'll be hauling ore out of there. We'll be mining by 2016." Of course, here we are, more than 10 years later, and there's not one inch of a road or a rail built there, not one inch; not one bit of ore has come up out of the ground, other than the core samples.

I've been there five times now. The first time I visited the Ring of Fire was August 2011, and it was so vibrant. It was bustling.

The Ring of Fire is a mining find in Ontario's Far North. There is a proven \$60 billion worth of ore in the ground. It's predominantly chromite, which is needed, along with nickel and iron ore, to make steel. It's in the ground. It was discovered.

I remember flying in on the helicopter. You take an airplane, then you take a float plane, then you take a helicopter. It's quite an ordeal to get there. I remember coming in with the helicopter, and my face was beaming because I see all these blue and white tents that are there and they're made in my riding. They're made in Rutherglen, a little town on the way to Mattawa. It was fascinating. I thought, "Oh wow, look at this. Already there's this economic activity for my riding." It was a tent city. That's all you can live in there.

As the helicopter got closer to landing, I'm looking and I see these massive piles of drill rods, and I beamed even more, because we have 12 manufacturers in our riding that make drill rods, one in Powassan and a bunch in North Bay. I thought, "Wow, this is fascinating." Cliffs Natural Resources had spent \$700 million exploring the Ring of Fire, drilling the test holes, delineating, as they call it, the ore body. They knew exactly where the ore was, down to about almost two miles. Some \$700 million they spent.

When I got there, there were 250 men and women working. There was a kitchen; they were flipping pancakes for breakfast; there were people coming and going on their shifts; they were drilling. It was just a hotbed of activity—250 men and women. Fast-forward to my last trip there, five years later: six people there. The tents are flying apart; they've torn apart. The wind has torn them apart. They've got a few people there. I think it was like that when you were there.

Mr. Ross Romano: That camp is gone.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: You're right; it literally blew away. MPP Ross Romano has been there more recently.

Here we are with only a half dozen people, because even though Cliffs had spent \$700 million and Noront spent about \$200 million, there's no road, there's no rail and there's no way.

We want to see that economic activity. We want to share that wealth. We want the jobs. The First Nations want the jobs. We will look at the Ring of Fire. We will address the delays, and we will put our plan in.

The last piece, Speaker, in the last seven minutes that I have, is really about respecting consumers and families. This is where it brings us to our signature program, called LIFT, Low-Income Individuals and Families Tax Credit.

This is the most generous Ontario personal income tax cut for low-income workers in an entire generation: 1.1 million taxpayers will find relief in the province of Ontario and one in six taxpayers will receive relief of about \$450 on average. Most will receive \$850. Families will receive \$1,700. When combined with the existing tax relief, about 90% of all Ontario tax filers with taxable incomes below \$30,000 will pay no Ontario personal income tax.

I see the clock has run out. I had so much more to cover, especially the quotes from all of the various organizations who support our fall economic statement. I will leave those for another day, Speaker, when we wrap this up.

But I do want to say that the job will be great, and the task is very daunting, but we will bring our plan for the people.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): To the minister: You will have time remaining, the next time this bill is brought forward. The next time this bill is brought forward, there will be time remaining, plus there will be time for questions and comments.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): But at this time, it is now 10:15, and this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce Matthew Perry, my legislative assistant, and also Phil and Amanda Metzloff. Amanda Metzloff received a new set of lungs here in Toronto in September and she's just doing really well.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I'd like to welcome members of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, specifically Mark Train, executive vice-president; from St. Catharines, President Ryan Madill and Vice-President Mike Vail; from Welland, Vice-President Joel Myers and Trustee Kyle Lehan; and from Niagara Falls, President Todd Brunning and Vice-President Justin Canestraro.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: J'aimerais, moi aussi, accueillir des pompiers de la ville d'Ottawa : John Sobey, Peter Kennedy, Malcolm Todd and, from Chalk River, Mark Lalonde. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I have the pleasure of introducing two guests today. One the member for Ottawa-Vanier has already mentioned is Mr. John Sobey of the Ottawa Professional Fire Fighters Association, who is from my riding.

And then also a very special guest today: I have my aunt, Cheryl Larocque, visiting the Legislature for the first time. My aunt hosts Thanksgiving every year for my family and is one of the most wonderful hosts you will ever see in the entire world. It's wonderful to have you here.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to welcome two guests to the Legislature today: Indulis Kulnieks and Gunars Rundans. Gunars is a fellow member at Royal Canadian Legion Branch 10. Welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to introduce two guys from my riding who tell me they're the best professional fire fighters in the building today, Daryl Smith and Warren Scott. Welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I'd like to introduce my legislative assistant, Tim Krizner, and his partner, Bruce Mayers, who are visiting Queen's Park today.

Hon. Rod Phillips: With respect to the Minister of Transportation, I'd like to introduce the two who told me they're the best fire fighters in Ontario, Dan Bonnar and Clive Deonarine, from the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association in Ajax. Welcome.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: They're all professional fire fighters, and they are the best. They reside in all of our ridings, but I'd like to welcome Peter Osterberg, who has come all the way from Timmins.

Ms. Jane McKenna: I'm fairly thrilled today that I've got the Burlington Professional Firefighters Association, IAFF 1552: the president, Dan VanderLelie, and the secretary, Paul Cunningham. I'm thrilled that you're here.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome Brett Gibson and Chris Hicknell from the Waterloo Professional Fire Fighters Association today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: It's a pleasure to introduce the following members from Ontario Park who are here at Queen's Park today: Eric Schwindt, John de Bruyn, Doug Ahrens, Chris Cossitt, Eric Hartemink, Mike Mitchell, Oliver Haan, Arno Schober, Teresa Van Raay and, on staff, Ken Ovington, Stefan Larrass and Tom McLaren. We want to invite everyone here to recognize them and also invite you to 228 at noon today for a reception.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'd like to welcome friends from back home with the Windsor Professional Firefighters Association: Wayne Currie, Kris Matton and Keith "Tracker" Traquair.

Also, I have two guests here, Samantha Rowe and her mum, Avery Mae Bedasse. It's Avery Mae's first time in Canada, from Jamaica. It was her first-ever flight on an airplane. We want to welcome her to Queen's Park here today.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I'd like to welcome three members from the Central York firefighters' association: Andre Bourrie, Kevin Saxton and Steve Buckingham. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Suze Morrison: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today Deb Singh, Maria Olaya, Cynamin Maxwell and Laura Salamanca, who are all here from the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre. Thank you, and welcome.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to introduce, from my riding, firefighter Mr. McDonald from the Sarnia Professional Firefighters Association, in the east gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Kevin Yarde: I'd like to welcome the Ontario professional firefighters here as well: Paul Lecompte and Kane Demers, president and vice-president of the Brampton Professional Fire Fighters Association.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to welcome all of the Toronto firefighters who are here. I had the opportunity to

meet with a couple this morning. It's great that you guys are here.

I'd also like to introduce a constituent of mine, Andy St. John, who is a second-year student at the University of Toronto, Scarborough campus—a journalism student. He was grilling me this morning. Welcome, Andy.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to welcome Robert Brandon, Michael Tucker, William Banting and Ray Kline from the Whitby Professional Firefighters Association. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Bhutila Karpoch: I'd also like to welcome the Toronto Professional Firefighters' Association, particularly John Blair, who is a constituent and a community leader.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I'm pleased to introduce three members of the senior leadership team at FirstOntario Credit Union: Kelly McGiffin, Eric de Roos and Kelly Harris. Welcome to Queen's Park.

I'd also like to introduce Phil Cartwright, who's vice-president of the Oakville firefighters' association. Welcome.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'd like to welcome Colin Hunter, the president of the Guelph Professional Firefighters Association, and all of the firefighters who are visiting today.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I have the pleasure of hosting five friends from Ottawa in the members' gallery today: John Sobey, who's the vice-president and incoming president of the Ottawa Professional Fire Fighters Association, Local 162; Malcolm Todd; Peter Kennedy, the current president; Mark Lalonde, who is from the Jock River area; and also Ann Bryan, who is the district VP from eastern Ontario. I look forward to meeting with them later today. Thank you, and welcome.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I'm pleased to welcome Mr. Jeff Voisin, secretary and treasurer of the Richmond Hill Professional Fire Fighters Association, Local 1957. They are holding a reception later today at 5:30 in the legislative dining room. I encourage all members to attend. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to welcome Kris Vopel from the Sudbury Professional Fire Fighters Association. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Jill Dunlop: It's a pleasure to host firefighters from my riding of Simcoe North. I have Leona McAusland and Ian Nicholson with the Orillia Professional Fire Fighters Association and Doug Ward with the Midland Fire Department.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I just wanted to welcome the members from the Barrie Professional Firefighters Association, most particularly Stephen Pomeroy.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to welcome Jeffrey McIntyre from Cornwall Fire Services. We had a great meeting this morning.

Mr. Stan Cho: I just want to quickly welcome the students from St. Edward Catholic School in the great riding of Willowdale.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): This is the last one. The member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Just in case anyone else was missed and all the members in the gallery, welcome back to Queen's Park.

1040

ORAL QUESTIONS

POLICE INDEPENDENCE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question is for the Premier. This is a question for the Premier about his leadership and his standards for his hand-picked senior staff. According to reports, Dean French, the Premier's hand-picked chief of staff, ordered senior political aides to direct police to raid cannabis stores the day marijuana became legal with the goal of getting “people in handcuffs” on the noon-hour news. Can the Premier confirm these reports?

Hon. Doug Ford: Well, first of all, through you, Mr. Speaker, I want to welcome all the firefighters down here. We've been putting out fires for the mess—there's been a fire for 15 years down here that we've been having to put out.

I also want to acknowledge—I believe they're young army cadets. I apologize if you aren't, but I want to welcome our good young army cadets up there. Thank you for your service.

Through you, Mr. Speaker: Since day one, our priority has been to protect communities and children, combating illegal black-market and organized crime. We were very clear: Illegal dispensaries have no place in Ontario, and operators would face stiff penalties and be shut down. Ministers, MPPs and staff at every level agree these places need to be shut down.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier knows or he should know that his office is supposed to stay clear of the day-to-day police operations. Instead, it seems that Dean French, the Premier's chief of staff, not only attempted to direct day-to-day police operations, but was actually demanding that police make arrests in order to get the story the government wanted on the noon-hour news.

Has the Premier even spoken to his chief of staff about this incident?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: As I was saying earlier, ministers, MPPs and staff at every single level—we need to shut down these illegal dispensaries. Again, we need to shut down the illegal pot shops. Our expectation is that police will and always will enforce the law. Today, 91% of illegal dispensaries are shut down in the four largest areas: Peel, York, Ottawa and Toronto. Notice I never mentioned Hamilton. I will never apologize for protecting the people of this province.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Government House leader, come to order. Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, come to order. Member for Mississauga–Malton, come to order.

Start the clock. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is fundamentally about the Premier's understanding of the necessity of having a separation between the police and the government. The role of the police is to serve and protect the people of this province, and the Premier's role is to let them do their job. In a democratic society, the government does not demand that police make arrests to generate noon-hour news hits.

The buck stops with the Premier on this issue. Does he think the actions of Dean French, his hand-picked chief of staff, are acceptable?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Our job is to make laws. The police's job is to enforce the laws, and I support the police. Unlike the Leader of the Opposition and the NDP, we support our police. They're doing a magnificent job.

Again, 91% of illegal dispensaries have been shut down in the four largest cities in Ontario. We're proud of them. We need to shut down every single illegal dispensary in this province. We need to protect our children, we need to protect our communities, and that's what we're going to do.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The member for Essex, come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Start the clock. Next question.

ONTARIO POWER GENERATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier, but it's disturbing that the Premier doesn't think that the police know how to do their own job without having the government interfere in the process.

This is not the only concerning story emerging from the Premier's office this week. As the Premier knows, Alykhan Velshi will be collecting a \$500,000 severance after a single day on the job thanks to an intervention by the Premier's chief of staff, Dean French.

Yesterday, the Premier said that he hadn't even spoken to his chief of staff about this. When will he?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I'd love the Leader of the Opposition to actually come up with something substantial, like saving taxpayers money, lowering taxes or lowering hydro rates. But if you've noticed how it works every single day, it's just personal attacks. They must not be happy people over there.

I can tell you OPG is responsible for their own staffing issues—and maybe they should be looking over at their staffing issues.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We have an opposition day motion today urging the government to pay for take-home cancer drugs for people who need them. Perhaps that's substantive enough for the government to support us in that effort.

What we are seeing, though, disturbingly, is a pattern here, and it's problematic. The Premier's hand-picked

chief of staff runs roughshod over all of the rules, the Ontario people get stuck with the bill—in this case, it's a half-a-million-dollar bill—and the Premier denies that anything has even happened and refuses to even ask his staff what is going on. That is not leadership.

Has the Premier spoken to his chief of staff about his role in firing Alykhan Velshi and generating this half-a-million-dollar waste of public money?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I just wish the Leader of the Opposition, who's so focused on OPG—why don't you start focusing on reducing hydro rates, putting money back into the taxpayers' pocket, reducing taxes, stimulating the economy and creating jobs? The Leader of the Opposition knows one thing, and that's attack, attack.

OPG is responsible for their own staffing issues and that's the way it's going to be.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier and his hand-picked chief of staff seem to think that "government" means that they can do whatever they want, whenever they want, and stick the people of Ontario with the bill; that's what they think government is all about—and it's mostly a bill due to the Premier's own vendettas against people who he doesn't like. The people of Ontario should not be stuck with a \$500,000 bill because the Premier doesn't like someone, and the police of this province should never, ever be told to make arrests in order to generate a photo-op for the government.

The Premier cannot pretend that this simply isn't happening. Has he spoken to his chief of staff and, if so, what did he say?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I believe there was a statement made in that question that imputed motive. I'm going to ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Premier?

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, through you, Mr. Speaker: I think the police in this province know pretty clearly who supports them and who doesn't support them. The police know that we're up there holding signs saying, "We love the police"; they're holding signs that say, "'Bleep' the police." That, again, is unacceptable.

We will support our police. We have confidence in our police because the police are doing their job.

1050

ETHICAL STANDARDS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. But I have to say that, thankfully, the police in this province know not to let a government lead them down the Ipperwash path again—a Conservative government.

This is also a question about the Premier's standards for cabinet ministers. According to multiple reports, a female staffer working for the then-opposition Conservatives

came forward with a complaint of sexual misconduct concerning the Minister of Finance.

Yesterday, the Premier said that an independent investigation into these allegations has already been conducted. The question is, can the Premier tell us now who conducted this investigation?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker and for the 20th time: There was a third-party investigation, and there is zero evidence. It was just a bunch of nonsense. I support my minister 1,000%.

Interjections.

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

Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier has stated that he has zero tolerance for sexual misconduct and that he will always act decisively to deal with it. Yet over the last month, he has prevented key facts from coming forward to the public when dealing with these issues.

If an independent investigation has happened, the government should be able to tell us who conducted it and what they found. What were the results? Will he provide some evidence that an independent investigation actually did occur?

It's not a matter of, "I say so, so just trust me." It's a matter of, "I say so, and here's the evidence." That's how people build trust, Speaker. Or is this just another time that the Premier is asking people to simply accept his word without any evidence?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: You know something? Throwing stones in a glass house doesn't work in this arena here. Why doesn't the Leader of the Opposition look into her two MPPs who are under investigation for treating their employees like a piece of dirt?

They're under investigation, her two MPPs. I'd like the Leader of the Opposition to answer about her own house—not about this house; about her own house.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: My question is to the Minister of Finance. One of the core commitments of our government is to create and protect good jobs here in Ontario. However, the previous Liberal government pursued policies that made life harder and less affordable for Ontario families and businesses.

For 15 years, Ontario's businesses struggled to keep up with Liberal taxes and regulation, and many paid the price. It was time for change.

Our government is committed to sending a message to the world that Ontario is open for business. Could the minister please inform the House about how he plans to increase competitiveness for businesses in Ontario and Canada?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you to the member from Brampton South. Back in September, we wrote to the federal government to ask them to take bold action in their fall economic statement today to support businesses in Ontario and across Canada.

Yesterday, Premier Ford asked the federal government to include 100% in-year accelerated capital cost depreciation in their fall statement. It's a very technical measure, but a measure like this would encourage new and immediate investment in Ontario industries. We look forward to working with the federal government to strengthen Ontario's competitiveness in the global economy.

Last week, our fall economic statement cleared the path for us to do exactly this. We will continue to work to ensure Ontario reclaims its place as the economic engine of Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: It is reassuring to hear that our government stands firm in our commitment to lowering taxes to support employers so they can create, invest and grow jobs here in Ontario.

The time for bold action is now. Recent US tax reform and policy decisions provide the US with a competitive advantage over Ontario and Canada. We must continue to work to create an environment in which Ontario businesses can thrive. The people of Ontario are counting on us to do everything we can to ensure the strength of our economy for generations to come.

Could the minister further explain how we will strengthen Ontario's competitiveness and ensure the world knows that Ontario is open for business?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: In our fall economic statement, we also include provisions for tax measures to strengthen Ontario's economy. This could include paralleling any federal government response today to our written request to accelerate capital cost depreciation of new assets. We're ready to work with the federal government to address the competitiveness challenges posed by the US tax reform. The risk of inaction is simply too great to stand idly by. We hope the federal government listens to Premier Ford's request of yesterday and shares our concerns.

We must take action to improve our competitiveness before we see further erosion on investment, jobs and growth opportunities in Ontario. In doing so, Speaker, the world will know that Ontario is open for business.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Last evening, this Legislature was filled with everyday working people looking for some pretty basic benefits on the job. The Premier might not think that a paid sick day matters, and we know he's never had to live on the minimum wage, but for the people who make this province work, it's a big deal.

As the Premier scales back people's rights, what does he have to say to them?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: When I criss-crossed this province, the number one issue next to

hydro was Bill 148. When I talked to the most needy people in society, they told me that they got laid off because of Bill 148. Tens of thousands of people lost their jobs under Bill 148. It discouraged companies from all over the world to come to Ontario and open a business. It was the worst job-killing bill. It was the worst bill for people, the most vulnerable people in society, to get a hand up. They want a job. We're getting rid of Bill 148.

We're going to open business here in Ontario. We're going to create jobs, lower taxes, lower hydro rates—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. When the standing ovation is so loud that I can't hear the person who has the floor, I have to interrupt the person who has the floor.

Interjection: Did Dean order that?

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier can yell as loud as he wants, but he's been pretty crystal clear on what his priorities are. Last week, he passed a tax cut for himself and some of the wealthiest people in this province. But working people are going to lose paid sick days and lose basic protections on the job. And if you're earning the minimum wage, you are going to lose nearly \$2,000 a year in wages because of the choices and priorities of this Premier.

How does this Premier justify that, Speaker?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: There are two items in the fall economic statement, Speaker. First of all, what the Leader of the Opposition was referring to is the tax credits. Had they read it closely, they would realize this tax credit goes to seniors, those with disabilities and those who claim Ontario's expense tax credit. They are the ones who suffered the most under the Liberal tax increases.

1100

In this fall economic statement, 150,000 filers with allowable Ontario medical expenses would have paid \$320 more in personal income tax. With our decision, these filers will pay \$35 million less in personal income tax. That's who is benefiting, those in addition to the 1.1 million low-income earners in Ontario who—

Interjections.

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

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Doug Downey: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Just this morning, we wrapped up Bill 47, our government's first step toward making Ontario open for business. Over the course of this debate, we heard members of the opposition refer to businesses as bottom-feeders. We heard special interests say that small business owners shouldn't be in business if they can't handle more regulation, higher costs and higher taxes. But recent studies have shown that this

approach has cost Ontario 56,000 jobs and taken \$23 billion out of Ontario's economy.

Speaker, can the minister inform the House what the government's next steps will be, beyond Bill 47?

Hon. Todd Smith: I'd like to thank our deputy whip for a great question this morning. You know, the debate on Bill 47 told us a lot about how the opposition feels about businesses in the province of Ontario. Yesterday, between the heckles and their speeches, it became clear that members of the official opposition think that businesses shouldn't make money. They refer to them as vindictive and bottom-feeders, Mr. Speaker. It's unacceptable.

That's not this government's policy. This government knows the best way to ensure that there are good jobs in Ontario is to make sure there are competitive businesses in Ontario.

After question period, we're going to vote on Bill 47. I hope there are members over there who believe that we should wind down the Ontario College of Trades. I hope there are members over there who believe we should create a competitive environment for businesses in Ontario. We want to make Ontario open for business, Mr. Speaker, and we hope they'll support us in doing that.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Doug Downey: I'd like to thank the minister for his very thoughtful answer. Yesterday, the minister said that our government understood both the ambitions and the aspirations that small business owners had for their futures. I know that small business owners in my riding of Barrie-Springwater-Oro-Medonte had a hard time adjusting to the attack that the old, tired Bill 148 unleashed on them. Some responded by scaling back business hours and raising prices, but some just outright had to close their doors. Some who had been in business for years ended up closing their doors entirely and will not reopen.

I know Ontario can do better, and I know the minister does too. Can the minister tell the House how the government is going to build on the success of Bill 47?

Hon. Todd Smith: Boy, that's another great question from our member from the Barrie area, Mr. Speaker.

Later today, I'm actually going to be heading to New Brunswick as my first stop to try and open more markets for Ontario's businesses. Then, tomorrow night and Friday, I'll be in Montreal. I'll be joining my colleagues from the other provinces and territories so that we can break down trade barriers across the country, so that Ontario's businesses can have trade from Nanaimo to New Glasgow and so that we can break down those inter-provincial walls that exist.

It's going to take more than opening up more access to the market, though. We have to get off the backs of our small businesses and medium-sized businesses. That means we have to get rid of the overregulation, Mr. Speaker: 380,000 pieces of regulation in this province, compared to half that in British Columbia, which is a pretty good place to live. We have to make some big-time cuts to red tape so that business owners can continue to feel the relief.

I can tell you, after the election, Mr. Speaker, there was a sigh of relief from the business community when that party lost the election and we won—

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Next question.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. Masonville Public School, Tweedsmuir Public School, Kettle Creek Public School: These are just a few of the schools in the London area that are currently awaiting funding for additions and renovations that were promised by the previous Liberal government, but that funding has not flowed.

Matt Reid, the chair of the Thames Valley District School Board, said, “These previously approved and announced projects need to move forward and it should not be held up because of politics. These communities have been waiting for far too long in order to have permanent additions and a local school in their community. We can’t be playing politics with our kids.”

Speaker, why is this government playing politics with London-area students and families by preventing much-needed school funding from flowing?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much for the question. Our government is committed to ensuring that our students have access to safe learning environments. In fact, to correct this situation, to tell you what is actually happening: The money for these projects has been allocated. There is no pause or delay in the approval process for these capital projects.

The Ministry of Education has been working closely and collaboratively with the school boards to get these projects built. Ministry officials and the minister’s staff continue to be in frequent contact with the school board to build these schools with the speed, the quality and the value that taxpayers expect.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, the \$67.4 million that was promised for London and area school projects has yet to be released. Staff from the Thames Valley District School Board have been in regular contact with the Ministry of Education, but all they are getting is the runaround. They have gotten no timelines on when, or even if, these projects will move ahead. In addition to schools, Speaker, much-needed child care and family centres are also on the line in London, Belmont, St. Thomas, Rodney, Dorchester, Woodstock and Ingersoll.

Children and families in the London area need answers. Will the \$67.4 million that was promised for London and area school projects be coming? Yes or no?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Yes. As I indicated previously, the school board is working with the ministry to make sure that these projects come forward. There is no political interference whatsoever here. This has been allocated; it is happening. The board is working with the Ministry of

Education to make sure, as I said before, that our students have access to safe learning environments and that these projects are going to be continuing as they are supposed to be, with the necessary speed and careful consideration, and to make sure that taxpayers receive the value that they expect from these projects. It is happening.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have a question about student safety today, to the Minister of Transportation. For decades, Ministers of Transportation, including me, relied on a report from Transport Canada from 1984 that concluded that school buses, because of the design of the seats and so on, were safer without seat belts for children riding on them. Through the media, specifically through CBC, we’ve now learned that a 2010 Transport Canada study concluded that three-point seat belts would save lives. That report was not circulated publicly, as far as we know, Mr. Speaker.

I assume that the minister has seen these reports in the media. My question to him is whether he has requested the 2010 Transport Canada report and whether he has seen that report. If so, would he share his own conclusions on the need for increased school bus safety with the people of Ontario and the children in school buses?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thank you very much for that question from the member opposite. I’m pleased to field my first question on transportation in the House as minister.

I appreciate the concern brought forward. My ministry and I are looking at the report in regard to seat belts. I in fact will be speaking to Transport Minister Marc Garneau in the next few days, and that’s an issue that I’ll be raising with him. I think the federal government has a role to play in ensuring that. If they want to go down that route of regulating seat belts in school buses, we can work in partnership with the federal government in seeing how that could come to fruition. But I appreciate the question.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?
1110

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate that the minister is going to speak with Minister Garneau. Of course, the federal government has already said they are going to review those regulations, and I think that’s a good thing. The reality is that there have been over 6,000 documented injuries and 16 deaths since 1999 on school buses. I think it’s fair to say that all of us who have been transportation ministers in the country, had we had the advantage of knowing about that report, would have moved in this direction much more quickly.

In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, I’m asking the minister whether he would provide national leadership by supporting mandatory seat belt legislation in Ontario school buses. This is the largest province, and you can lead the way. I’m actually going to offer you an opportunity: Next week we’ll be debating Bill 56, which is my private member’s bill that would make three-point seat belts mandatory on all school buses. Can we count on your support?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: It’s kind of surreal that I’m now being asked questions from the former Premier of the

province, who had 15 years while in office to make these changes necessary and didn't do it. If it was a priority for her then, it would have been done. It's unfortunate that they didn't do it.

What I will promise this House is that I'll work with the member opposite on this issue to review it to ensure that we will take action, if necessary, going forward. But again, we need the partnership and the direction from the federal government, and we're willing to have that conversation with them. Going forward, I hope we can do the benefit because the focus of this government is the people of Ontario, and it's the safety of our kids throughout the province that we want to ensure, and we'll continue to work towards that.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Parm Gill: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Our government is committed to making Ontario open for business. In the short time our government has been in office, we have already done so much to mark the end of the Liberal tax-and-spend policy approach. Small businesses suffered for 15 long years under the previous Liberal government, and all of Ontario paid the price. That is why we scrapped the cap-and-trade carbon tax and have introduced legislation that, if passed, would repeal the most damaging aspects of Bill 148.

Ontario's small businesses provide good jobs, support our economy and are the foundations of our communities. Could the minister please explain the steps our government is taking in the fall economic statement to further support small businesses in Ontario?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you to the member from Milton for the question. We are taking action to stop the damaging policies the previous Liberal government was prepared to put in place. Unfortunately, the previous Liberal government took a page out of the federal government's playbook. The federal government introduced a measure to remove the small business corporate income tax rate on the amount of passive income earned by a corporation. In 2018, the Ontario Liberal government decided to join in on this assault on small business.

In our fall economic statement, we announced that we are not proceeding with this proposal. Instead, we will provide support to small business that has been missing for 15 long years.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Parm Gill: Back to the minister: Our small businesses were handed challenge after challenge by the previous Liberal government. High electricity rates, punishing taxes and the restrictive measures of Bill 148 are just some of the things businesses had to overcome. Unfortunately, many of them simply could not succeed. The odds were stacked against them.

As businesses closed up shop and fled the province, it was clear help was needed. But to the relief of small business owners and employees across this province, Ontario is finally open for business. Could the minister please describe the significance of our decision to not proceed with the Liberals' proposal to phase out access to

the small business deduction based on the passive income a corporation earns?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: The Liberals' 2018 budget continued their assault on small business by eliminating the lower tax rate. This measure would have increased taxes on Ontario's small businesses by about \$160 million annually by 2020 and 2021. Speaker, that is absolutely unacceptable.

Premier Ford has made it very clear that individuals, families and businesses in Ontario pay enough taxes already. We will not be imposing any new taxes on the hard-working people of the province of Ontario. After 15 years of Liberal waste, mismanagement and scandals, Ontario families and businesses can finally breathe a sigh of relief. We have made a commitment to make Ontario open for business.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Members take their seats. Order. The House will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for York Centre, come to order.

Start the clock. Next question.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is for the Premier. While school capital projects grind to a halt in the London area and other education programs are left in limbo, parents, students and teachers across Ontario are on edge, waiting to see what cuts are coming for their local schools.

With the release of a new funding formula consultation, the government is now focusing exclusively on finding efficiencies in our already-strained education system. People are right to be worried.

Will the Premier tell anxious families exactly what cuts the government has planned for schools across this province? Will it be more cuts from school repairs, special needs assistance or after-school programs?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Well, thank you very much for the question but, Mr. Speaker, through you, what I can tell the member is what people are actually worried about and concerned about is the \$15-billion deficit that we inherited from the previous Liberal government. People are very, very concerned about that, because we know that we are spending \$1 billion a month on interest to pay that debt. We've got to get that deficit under control, and that's what we're working on.

We are making sure, first of all, that our number one priority in education is making sure that each child has a safe and meaningful education in a building that is appropriate for them. That is what we are concerned with. But in order to be able to do that—and it's no secret—we've indicated that we're taking a look at each and every program in each and every ministry to make sure that we can find those efficiencies, because that \$15-billion deficit isn't just going to disappear. We've got to work hard on that and—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: That was a slightly different response than when the member from London West asked specifically about the Thames Valley schools with the repairs that are being stopped. Absolutely, Minister.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Premier again: I actually think that people are more worried, families are more worried about the fact that their kids are going to be sitting with their hats and mitts on again in classes this winter. How are they supposed to learn?

When the Conservatives cut \$100 million in school repair funding this summer, school boards were left scrambling and projects had to be cancelled. Years and years of neglect by Conservative and Liberal governments have led us to a \$16-billion—you want to talk billions—repair backlog for our schools. Now this government is looking for more places to cut and is taking things from bad to worse.

How many school projects, and in what communities, will have to be cancelled while this government decides how much deeper to cut?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Well, it's hard to know where to start here, Mr. Speaker. First of all, to go back to the situation with the Thames Valley District School Board, as I indicated in the previous answer to the question from the member from London West, that work is continuing. Those projects have been approved. The boards of education and the Ministry of Education are working together to keep those projects moving.

1120

With respect to your suggestion about cuts, that's not happening. What we are looking for is efficiencies in the way that those services are being delivered. There's a big difference between those two issues. We want to make sure that every child has a safe and comfortable learning environment. That's our number one priority. That is what we are focusing on and that is what we're working on very hard to deliver as we also address that \$15-billion debt that is worrying people and that is stifling the government's responsibility to continue to deliver those services.

But first and foremost—

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

Next question.

TAXATION

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: My question is for the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. This week, Ontarians were able to enjoy some of the lowest gas prices in over a year. The residents of my riding of Markham-Thornhill are able to have some peace of mind, knowing that our government is putting every effort toward making life more affordable for them and ensuring we are keeping our promises. This drop marked the beginning of many more savings this government plans to provide and is just a small part of what Ontarians can expect.

Last week, the Minister of Finance introduced the fall economic statement. He highlighted some of the important steps our government has made. Can the minister update for this Legislature what his ministry has done to keep our promise of relief to the residents of Ontario?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member for Markham-Thornhill—and thank you for that question—he's quite correct. The Minister of Finance and the President of the Treasury Board led a discussion last week which indicated that \$3.2 billion worth of savings had already been found by our government. Swift action by our government has already returned \$2.7 billion and identified significant tax relief.

Our government was elected to put money back into people's pockets. One of the ways we did that was by eliminating the cap-and-trade carbon tax that was taking money from Ontario families. By the passage of that act, we will return \$260 a year to an average family. As the member mentioned, those savings are already being felt at the pumps: just this morning, at the Costco on Kingston Road, 98.6 cents a litre.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I thank the minister for his answer. He's had a large role to play in providing relief to the people of Ontario, and his hard work is clearly paying off.

There is, however, one thing that runs the risk of allowing this relief to be taken away from our province. The Prime Minister has made it clear he plans to impose his own carbon tax on this province: a tax that will make gas prices higher, a tax that will raise the cost to heat our homes, a tax that will increase the cost of almost everything, and, let's be clear, a tax that Ontarians can't afford.

Can the minister tell us what we can expect should the federal carbon tax be imposed on this province?

Hon. Rod Phillips: By 2022, people in Canada, Ontario families, can expect \$648. That's the cost of the Trudeau carbon tax. And, Mr. Speaker, the federal Minister of the Environment says they're not done; they are putting in place the framework. But \$648: That's what the FAO said.

Our Premier is assembling a coalition of provinces—there are now six of them—that oppose the federal carbon tax, that oppose what is going on in Ottawa. We will do everything in our power to make sure that there is transparency about the carbon tax. The finance minister spoke about measures so people can see on the gas pump what the cost per litre is, what the cost is on their natural gas bill. We will make sure Ontarians know what it's costing and we will use everything in our power to stop the Trudeau carbon tax.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

Mr. Chris Glover: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Last night, the government rejected Ryerson University's plan for a new law school. This is now the sixth cancellation universities have seen from this government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the member. I can't hear his question. I would ask the House to come to order—both sides of the House to come to order.

I apologize again. I'll give you extra time.

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that. I couldn't hear myself.

My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Last night, the government rejected Ryerson University's plan for a new law school. This is now the sixth cancellation universities have seen from this government. Ryerson was closing a gap by offering innovative programming with a focus on social justice and mandatory work placements. The law school has passed multiple approvals since 2015 and was going to offer access to law school at a lower price.

Why did the minister reject these plans in the last stage of approval?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. The people of Ontario gave this government a mandate to restore respect for taxpayers, and part of that process is making sure that government services and programs are efficient and effective.

My ministry reviewed the submission by Ryerson University to create a new Juris Doctor program at their university. My ministry considers many factors in making a recommendation, factors like whether the program duplicates other programs, whether there is labour market demand, whether there is student demand, the proposed tuition rates, and the program's alignment with the institution's strategic mandate agreement.

My ministry and I came to the same conclusion: that at this time, it was not in the interest of the people of Ontario to approve the proposal. However, I am absolutely committed to working with Ryerson University—

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

Mr. Chris Glover: So many Ontarians have been priced out of access to our legal system. They can't afford to hire lawyers, and those who want to be lawyers can't afford to go to law school. Ryerson proposed an innovative law school with a focus on access to the justice system for all people in our province. The proposal emphasized the lower tuition fees—still ridiculously high, but at \$20,000, half of the amount of some of our other law schools in the province.

This would have been a welcome addition to Ontario's post-secondary sector, but instead, the government is scrapping the project without revealing the cost of the cancellation. This was the same story that was spun about the cancelled campuses in Brampton, Milton and Markham. Millions of dollars had already gone into these projects, which have now been wasted.

Can the minister tell the House today how much public money has been wasted on cancelling yet another university project that was well on its way to fruition?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: We promised the people of Ontario to restore accountability and trust in government, and that includes making decisions that may be difficult, but are ultimately in the interests of the people of Ontario. We have come to the decision that, at this time, we will not be supporting a Juris Doctor program at Ryerson.

I must say that I am surprised by the NDP's inability to respect the taxpayer. They continue to demonstrate that the

people of Ontario cannot trust them to govern in an effective and efficient manner that puts the interests of the people first. Unlike the Liberals who promised everything and the NDP who will say yes to anything, we are focused on respecting taxpayers and ensuring that the services and programs that our government supports are efficient and effective.

SKILLED TRADES

Ms. Jill Dunlop: My question is also to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, last week, Bill 47 was before the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. Presenters talked about the changes proposed by the government that would reform the apprenticeship and skilled trades system in Ontario. The proposed changes in the legislation, if passed, would wind down the Ontario College of Trades, standardize the journey person-to-apprentice ratios, and place a moratorium on classifications and reclassifications in Ontario.

1130

I have heard from many skilled trade businesses in Simcoe North how excited they are about these changes. Can the minister tell us what job creators told the committee and why we know that the legislation, if passed, will create better jobs for Ontario?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member for that question. Speaker, employers impressed upon the committee the need to pass Bill 47 in order to create good-quality jobs for the people of Ontario and to address the skills gap.

Sean Reid from the Progressive Contractors Association said, "All of the data, from BuildForce Canada and other think tanks that are studying this issue, shows that we have a massive shortage of labour in our province right now and it is only getting worse." Mr. Reid went on to say, "I've talked to many members. In one case, one fellow had 35 resumés of people he was ready to employ, but he could not even hire one of them because of the ratios."

Speaker, employers clearly emphasize that Bill 47 is on the right track to create good-quality jobs and will help fulfill our promise to the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Jill Dunlop: It is great to hear that job creators in Ontario are responding so positively to the proposed changes to the skilled trades and apprenticeship system in Ontario.

I also know that both employers and organized labour have been quoted saying the Ontario College of Trades was not operating effectively. Even the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers' executive chairman said the college was "unable to achieve its mandate." Meanwhile, LIUNA says the college created "enormous amounts of red tape" and "confusion."

Speaker, it is clear from the committee and the public comments of stakeholders that the College of Trades was an impediment to the apprenticeship system in Ontario.

Can the minister tell us more about why the passage of the Making Ontario Open for Business Act is an important step in this government's keeping its promise to create

better skilled trade jobs and make Ontario open for business?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Speaker, employers said loud and clear during committee that Bill 47 will create jobs in the skilled trades. Patrick McManus of the Ontario Skilled Trades Alliance said, “This is a very critical change for the skilled trades. The opportunity for employment is actually going to significantly grow.” He went on to say that he estimates the changes will create tens of thousands of well-paying, high-quality jobs.

Meanwhile, Jamie Adam, president of Pioneer Craftsmen, said:

“With the aging workforce in Ontario, we need to act now if we want to start to close that skills gap. Thankfully, Bill 47 is a huge step in the right direction.

“Pioneer Craftsmen, my company, currently has four apprentices. This legislation will allow us to hire immediately two additional apprentices. They are going to then receive the additional skills, training and support that they need to become highly skilled tradespeople.”

Speaker, Bill 47 will create good-quality jobs, and I encourage the opposition to support making Ontario—

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

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Next question.

RENT REGULATION

Ms. Suze Morrison: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. This government is reopening a loophole that scraps rent control protections for tenants in new rental units, even though the Premier said during the campaign, “When it comes to rent control, we’re going to maintain the status quo.”

Can the minister explain this reversal and tell us why this government thinks that landlords should have the power to double or triple their tenants’ rent at any time?

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, with all due respect to the member opposite, we are upholding our commitment to tenants across this province. We made that commitment during the campaign. We made it in the fall economic statement.

Speaker, we have a housing supply shortage, especially in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area. We cannot accept the status quo that, over the last 15 years, the previous government brought no ideas to the table to increase housing supply.

We’re going to work with stakeholders. We’re going to listen to people when they have suggestions, unlike the previous government. The only way to create an atmosphere for new purpose-built rental housing in this province is to do exactly what our government did in the fall economic statement.

With good public policy we’re going to move forward, but we are going to make sure—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Once again, I had to interrupt the member who had the floor because I couldn’t hear because of the standing ovation.

Start the clock. Supplementary.

Ms. Suze Morrison: With all respect to the minister, when the last Conservative government scrapped rent control, it did not create new affordable housing. Scrapping rent control didn’t work then and it’s not going to work now. It will only make renting more expensive and more stressful for tenants.

Instead of letting landlords reach into tenants’ pockets whenever they want, the government should be investing in new affordable housing that will help families get a leg up in life. Why is this minister cutting \$100 million from affordable housing programs this year alone?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, with all due respect to the member opposite, we’re cancelling the Development Charges Rebate Program, which would only benefit 13 municipalities. By moving forward and lifting that exemption for new units, we’re going to create housing in 444 municipalities, not 13.

Speaker, I’ve said to this member before, and I’m going to say to all members of the House, we want to work across party lines. Our Housing Supply Action Plan has an opportunity for all voices to come together, to have those good suggestions on how we can increase speed, on how we can have a better mix, on how we can reduce costs, on how we can listen to both landlords and tenants and, most importantly, how we can look at innovative ways to increase the housing supply. That’s what our Housing Supply Action Plan will do.

Again, I challenge this member and every member of the opposition to participate in a positive way to increase housing—

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Next question.

NATURAL GAS

GAZ NATUREL

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure.

Sous la gouvernance du gouvernement précédent, nos étudiants, familles, entreprises et aînés avaient de la difficulté à faire les fins de mois. Les journées raccourcissent, les nuits s’allongent, la neige couvre les rues. C’est clair que l’hiver s’en vient en Ontario.

Winter in years prior was especially difficult because energy poverty was the reality for so many as Ontario’s hydro rates, the highest in North America over the years, forced people to choose between eating and heating and severely hindered Ontario’s rural economy.

Bill 32, the Access to Natural Gas Act, proposes to reach 78 communities and give the great people of our province an affordable home heating option. Can the minister please update the House on the status of the bill?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thank you for the question. I would also like to thank the members on the Standing Committee on General Government, particularly my parliamentary assistant, the member from King–Vaughan, for all of his hard work on Bill 32.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell is correct. Skyrocketing hydro bills, stemming from the former Liberal government, was the primary contributor to increasingly unaffordable living costs in Ontario. I am so pleased to stand here as Minister of Infrastructure in the government for the people, led by our Premier, to put more money back in the people's pockets.

We understand that the people are struggling to heat their homes. Unlike the Liberals, we are properly addressing affordability costs in Ontario. Rather than trying to ban natural gas in Ontario, our government will reach rural, remote, northern and First Nations communities, make life affordable and open Ontario for business.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: I thank the minister for his bold leadership.

Je sais que je parle pour mes commettants et les résidents de partout en Ontario lorsque je dis que nous avons hâte d'ouvrir la prospérité pour des douzaines de communautés rurales éloignées et non servies.

Estimates suggest that residential customers and families can save between \$800 and \$2,500 per year just by switching from electric heat, propane or oil to natural gas. That's big savings for the people in rural and northern communities.

En éliminant le système de la taxe sur le carbone, les familles épargneront 80 \$ par année, et pour les entreprises environ 285 \$.

Ontario's agri-food sector is also one of the world's most diverse, supporting 1.2 million jobs. That's one in eight Ontario workers.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell the House how constituents and affected groups are reacting to our government's natural gas policy?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: What a great question. Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. The response we have received back from numerous individuals has been uplifting, to say the least, and I would like to take the opportunity to highlight a few examples.

For instance, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce had this to say about our proposed legislation: "Bill 32 will allow rural and northern communities to realize their potential and become economic drivers for Ontario.... Bill 32 sends a clear signal that Ontario is open for business." Inspiring words, to say the least, Mr. Speaker.

Further encouraging commentary we have heard about this legislation comes from the town of South Bruce. They stated that what they like about our government's proposal, compared to the previous government's, is that "this is much broader, so we are going to see gas expansion to many more communities than under" the previous, Kathleen "Wynne government."

Mr. Speaker, I greatly look forward to this bill being brought back for third reading, and hopefully it will receive unanimous support from all parties here—

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

Next question.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ian Arthur: My question is to the Premier, through you, Mr. Speaker. There are reports today that the Ontario government plans to copy Australia's climate change policy. Australia's policy reverses the polluter-pay principle and instead forces taxpayers to pay polluters. What's worse is that since this policy was implemented, Australia's emissions have gone up.

Did the Premier have the Environmental Commissioner fired because he did not want his climate change policy to be subjected to independent scrutiny?

Hon. Doug Ford: Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member: I do thank him for the question. We were elected on a clear promise to reduce costs, to get rid of the cap-and-trade program and to fight the carbon tax, but also to bring forward a balanced plan for the environment, and that's what we'll do. In looking to that balanced plan, we are looking, yes, around the world. We're looking at programs like the reverse auction in Australia.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know why the member takes such offence at the idea of a program that, for instance, promotes trees being planted and promotes low-cost solutions to reducing carbon. Why is it only the high-cost solutions to reducing carbon?

We'll bring forward a pragmatic plan. We'll bring forward a responsible plan. We'll bring forward a plan that does not, however, have the highest carbon tax in history—\$150 a tonne—which is what one of their members suggested.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Ian Arthur: That's not a plan. That's a path to disaster, and it will be done on the backs of taxpayers.

In September, the Environmental Commissioner released a report that warned of the impacts of scrapping Ontario's climate change plan without providing a replacement. In the response, the minister wrote back to the Environmental Commissioner: "I want to respectfully advise that any suggestion" saying "we should pursue policies that betray commitments we made to the people" will not be taken.

In retrospect—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Mr. Ian Arthur: I can wait.

In retrospect, these comments can be viewed as a warning and perhaps even a threat against an independent officer of the Legislature.

Is the Premier firing the Environmental Commissioner because he wants an environmental lapdog, not a watchdog?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, under the proposals that the member is misrepresenting, Ontario will still—

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

Hon. Rod Phillips: Withdrawn.

Under the proposals that are being so characterized by the member, Ontario will still be the only province that has an independent environment commissioner, independent through the auspices of the Auditor General—a very important step, I think.

But Mr. Speaker, again, what is it about the NDP that makes them frightened about talking about other options? What is it that makes them so concerned about anything except putting a tax on Ontarians? On something as complicated as climate, why can they not see that there can be more than one solution? Why do they insist on punishing Ontario families, like the previous Liberal government did? We won't do that, and we stand by our commitment.

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

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on a point of order.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I need to make a technical correction to my response to the member opposite regarding the projects at the Thames Valley District School Board. Funding has been allocated and continues to be allocated to these projects. The Ministry of Education will continue their work with the school board to move these projects through the approval process.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yesterday during the debate on Bill 47—I would like to correct my record—I said the next election is in three years, five months and 11 days. In fact, it is in three years, six months, 11 days, five hours, three minutes.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Parkdale—High Park.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I'd like to take the opportunity to introduce, and to welcome to the House, Harvey Bischof, who is the president of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation.

DEFERRED VOTES

MAKING ONTARIO OPEN FOR BUSINESS ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 POUR UN ONTARIO OUVERT AUX AFFAIRES

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

Bill 47, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, the Labour Relations Act, 1995 and the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009 and make complementary amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 47, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi, la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail et la Loi de 2009 sur l'Ordre des métiers de l'Ontario et l'apprentissage et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois.*

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

The division bells rang from 1147 to 1152.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the members to take their seats.

On November 20, 2018, Mr. Smith, Bay of Quinte, moved third reading of Bill 47, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, the Labour Relations Act, 1995 and the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009 and make complementary amendments to other Acts.

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

Ayes

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

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

Nays

Andrew, Jill	Gélinas, France	Morrison, Suze
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Glover, Chris	Natyshak, Taras
Arthur, Ian	Gretzky, Lisa	Rakocevic, Tom
Begum, Doly	Harden, Joel	Sattler, Peggy
Bell, Jessica	Hassan, Faisal	Schreiner, Mike
Berns-McGown, Rima	Hatfield, Percy	Shaw, Sandy
Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Singh, Gurratan
Bourgouin, Guy	Hunter, Mitzi	Singh, Sara
Burch, Jeff	Karpoche, Bhutla	Stiles, Marit
Coteau, Michael	Kernaghan, Terence	Tabuns, Peter
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	Lalonde, Marie-France	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	Lindo, Laura Mae	Vanthof, John
Fraser, John	Mamakwa, Sol	West, Jamie

French, Jennifer K.
Gates, Wayne

Mantha, Michael
Monteith-Farrell, Judith

Wynne, Kathleen O.
Yarde, Kevin

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 69; the nays are 45.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Kingston and the Islands has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks concerning the Environmental Commissioner. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

This House stands in recess until 3 p.m.
The House recessed from 1157 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I'm pleased to introduce a familiar face here in the Legislature today: Deanna Allain, and her dog Carlin. They're advocates for improved service dog accessibility across the province of Ontario. She's going to be visiting with several members in the coming weeks to discuss the improvements that can be made to our current laws governing service dogs, and the need for legislation to also support service dogs in training. I'm pleased to meet with her today. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I just want to mention that today we have the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association. They're having a picture taken out in the front at 5 o'clock with the Toronto fire November truck, followed by their reception at 5:30 in rooms 228 and 230. Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HARRY LESLIE SMITH

Mr. Joel Harden: I rise today to offer prayers and good wishes to Harry Leslie Smith, a 95-year-old historian, campaigner, World War II veteran and lifelong socialist who, as I speak, is critically ill in Belleville, Ontario.

Harry is a legend. One of the most eloquent champions of universal, free, public health care, he has devoted himself to educating younger generations about what life was like before the creation of Britain's National Health Service.

Born in Barnsley, in northern England, Harry recalls his childhood, when health care was only available for those who could afford it. His sister, like so many others, died from tuberculosis in a workhouse infirmary, too poor to receive treatment.

It was Harry's generation who, after winning the war, returned home to win the peace. In Britain and in Canada, we owe so much to those who were determined to build a more caring society, where health care is a right for all, not a privilege for the few.

In recent years, Harry has urged global action to address the refugee crisis, saying, "If we could solve the refugee crisis in 1945, I know we can do it again as long as we pull together." In 2015, he visited refugee camps in France, and he implored us to open our hearts to them.

He asks us to make sure that his past doesn't become our future. We need to honour the future that he and his generation built.

Harry, please get well soon. We're thinking of you. We're with you now more than ever.

ORDER OF OTTAWA RECIPIENTS

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I'm proud to rise today in recognition of two outstanding constituents in the riding of Carleton. They will be receiving the Order of Ottawa tomorrow night, which celebrates outstanding citizens.

The first constituent is Mr. Bernie Ashe. He has enjoyed a long and formidable career as a key community builder in the nation's capital, contributing to its economic growth and making the city of Ottawa a better place to live and work.

In his role as executive vice-president and CEO of the Ottawa Senators Hockey Club from 1990 to 1997, he helped establish the business of hockey and build the Canadian Tire Centre. Mr. Ashe helped the Ottawa Sports and Entertainment Group foundation raise more than \$2 million to lower financial barriers and enable youth from all backgrounds to participate in team sports.

The second recipient is Mr. Lawrence Greenspon. Lawrence Greenspon is the senior partner at Greenspon Granger Hill and practises criminal defence and personal injury litigation. He is the only lawyer in Ottawa who is a specialist certified by the law society in both criminal and civil litigation.

For more than 35 years, Mr. Greenspon has represented disadvantaged and diverse individuals and groups against governments, police, insurance companies and corporations.

In 1981, the International Year of Disabled Persons, Mr. Greenspon co-founded REACH, the Resource Education Advocacy Centre for the Handicapped, and was a chair and board member of the organization for more than 10 years.

I look forward to congratulating them in person tomorrow night, and I wish them all the best.

SYLVIE HAUTH

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Today, I rise with good news and congratulations. The people of Thunder Bay were pleased to learn that the acting chief of police, Sylvie Hauth, has been appointed chief of police of Thunder Bay Police Service. While the service has had its challenges

over the years, we welcome this as a new beginning and look forward to her leadership.

When Chief Hauth's appointment was announced, she said she will "lead by three very important principles—accountability, consistency and transparency—in all that we do, and I think that these fundamental principles will guide my actions towards the safety and well-being of our community for everyone that calls Thunder Bay home."

Chief Hauth is the first woman to hold the post of chief of police in Thunder Bay. On Tuesday afternoon, I was so excited to congratulate her on her promotion.

Chief Hauth joined the police service 25 years ago, and she brings a wealth of experience to her position. She has accomplished many firsts: first woman to be an inspector with the service, first woman to be the deputy chief—and she can now add chief of police to her list of accomplishments.

I was privileged to be in attendance at Chief Hauth's swearing-in ceremony on Tuesday. It was an honour to give her my personal best wishes.

I would like to take this opportunity to again congratulate Chief Hauth. I look forward to working together with her as she makes improvements to Thunder Bay Police Service.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Miss Kinga Surma: I recently had the pleasure of touring the Kinectrics facility in Etobicoke with my colleague the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Kinectrics is a leading testing, inspection, certification and consulting company with over 25 unique lab and testing facilities. With over 100 years of experience, Kinectrics is helping Ontario and its nuclear industry continue to contribute to good jobs in the province.

During the tour, I saw first-hand the innovation at the Kinectrics state-of-the-art lab where they test and engineer low-inventory distillation technology for radioisotope production.

Last month, Kinectrics and Bruce Power announced that they have entered into a memorandum of understanding to collaborate in the production of medical isotopes and further promote Ontario's role as a world leader in this innovative field of medical treatment. Companies like Kinectrics, Bruce Power and others are showing leadership to ensure Canada and Ontario remain at the forefront of radioisotope production.

Ontario's nuclear advantage will have a significant positive impact on human health across the globe, keeping our air clean and safe while expanding Canada's leadership role in some of the most exciting and innovative areas of science and health care.

Partnerships between these companies will also contribute to Ontario's economy.

HOME CARE

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I rise today to share an issue that is critical for many of my constituents in my riding of Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, and that is home care.

I receive daily emails and phone calls from constituents sharing their many serious concerns regarding the care of their loved ones at home. Far too many patients are being neglected and left with insufficient care.

Caregiving for our loved ones can be physically and mentally overwhelming. Unfortunately, it can also be a significant financial burden. One constituent paid over \$4,000 in just 10 days, out of their own pocket, to an outside agency just to ensure that their father was able to receive the care that he was assessed for.

Another constituent writes of their mother's care, recording over 20 missed visits, 20 communication issues and over 21 different PSWs, all within the last five months of their mother's life.

The last Conservative government made deep cuts to health care and front-line service, and in 15 years, the Liberals did very little to make it better.

This government's recent announcement of \$3.2 billion in cuts will do nothing to help our seniors and will only make a clearly strained and underfunded system much worse.

Our parents and our grandparents deserve a government that protects their safety, their health, and their dignity.

1510

LAURIER BRANTFORD YMCA

Mr. Will Bouma: I rise today to bring attention to an important event taking place in the riding of Brantford–Brant. After much anticipation, the new Laurier Brantford YMCA opened its doors on September 14, 2018. This innovative partnership between Wilfrid Laurier University and the YMCA of Hamilton Burlington Brantford expands athletic opportunities for students at the Brantford campus, supports campus growth, enhances broader community access to health, wellness and social supports, and further bolsters the revitalization of the city's core.

The facility's official grand opening celebration will take place on Saturday, December 1. The facility's distinctive design earned architectural firm CannonDesign an award of excellence from Architect Magazine.

Here are a few of the amenities in this 120,000-square-foot facility:

- an aquatic centre with a two-tank pool for lane swimming, swimming lessons, aquatic fitness and therapy, plus an on-deck hot tub for teaching, fitness, therapy and leisure;

- a youth zone for recreational, social and leadership development programs;

- a double gym designed for sports and competition, with retractable stadium seating for 860 people, plus a taping and first aid room for event athletic therapists;

- a single gym for drop-in sports and larger programs;

- a fitness centre; and

- health intake consultation rooms for specialized community-based health care programs, in partnership with Hamilton Health Sciences and the Brant Community Healthcare System.

Speaker, this facility will serve the residents of Brantford, Brant county and Six Nations, the post-secondary institutions in the community, including Laurier and Conestoga College, and other visitors.

KEN ANTAYA AND RON McDERMOTT

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm rising today to offer my congratulations and gratitude to two leaders in my riding who are retiring after many years of service.

LaSalle mayor Ken Antaya served 13 years as the town's deputy clerk and clerk. He worked as the CAO in Colchester South for another five years before returning to the town of LaSalle, where he assumed the role of CAO for the next 17 years. Ken retired as CAO in 2004, and in 2010 ran for mayor of LaSalle. He was re-elected in 2014.

Ken spent his entire working life in service of the public, and the town of LaSalle has benefited greatly from his involvement and dedication to public service. The town of LaSalle has seen tremendous growth and change during Ken's tenure. Ken's leadership has been critical to building a culture of civic engagement and responsible government at the municipal level.

Ron "Tout" McDermott was first elected as mayor of Essex in 2003 and has served for 18 years. Tout has also spent his life engaged and active in his community. He has volunteered as a local baseball manager and was involved in local horse racing. He committed himself to public service and leaves a legacy of reaching out across political lines to improve the lives of his constituents, and he has been a reliable friend and colleague. Tout is a leader by example, making himself accessible to the people he represented, and fostering a legacy of co-operation and putting his community first.

Speaker, it is my pleasure and my honour to say thank you and congratulations to both of these gentlemen and to offer my best wishes to Tout and Ken. Enjoy your retirement and thank you very much for your service to our communities.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I am proud to inform everyone in this House that Ontario is open for business. It's not just a slogan, nor a display sign; it is business development in action.

The Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade is taking every opportunity to promote business and attract investments to Ontario. Since 2003, China has emerged as Canada's second-largest trading partner and is Canada's third-largest export market.

I was asked by the ministry to organize a business round table in my riding of Richmond Hill to promote Canada-China trade while also promoting trade to the US. On November 8, I organized a round table gathering 15 board chairs and 20 business leaders from various Chinese business associations representing Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu, Hebei, Zhejiang, Shenzhen, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade.

Interjection: Wow. Great job, Daisy.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you. The participants will be the trade bridge for our future development, which is the most important thing. We discussed ways to reduce barriers, cutting red tape and identifying ways to attract foreign investors, as well as increasing exports from Ontario. I'm looking forward to positive results. All participants were very enthusiastic about it.

However, Mr. Speaker, I would like to personally thank Minister Todd Smith. Even though he was only three days on this job, he is making this event a very successful event with parliamentary assistant—

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

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Lindsey Park: Every day, thousands of residents from my riding of Durham commute to work in and around the GTA. As our community continues to grow, the demand for better transportation networks has increased. Unfortunately, for 15 years under the last Liberal government, my constituents were left waiting: waiting for transit and waiting in traffic. During the election campaign, I heard every day that people were tired of the waiting and wanted a government that made their concerns a priority.

That's why I'm so pleased that our government for the people is committed to expanding GO train service to Bowmanville in Durham. We've committed to delivering two-way, all-day service expansions, which means no longer will commuters be forced to transfer from the GO train in Oshawa to connecting bus services. Commuters will be able to enter the GO train at any station on the Lakeshore East line and remain there until they're home in Durham. Commute times will go down, and my constituents will be able to spend more time with their families.

Speaker, I know that the people in my riding work hard, and I'm so proud to be a part of a government that continues to make the concerns of commuters and other hard-working Ontarians a priority.

To my constituents in Durham: I'll see you on the GO.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT (SOCIAL ASSISTANCE RESEARCH COMMISSION), 2018

LOI DE 2018 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE MINISTÈRE DES SERVICES SOCIAUX ET COMMUNAUTAIRES (COMMISSION DE RECHERCHE SUR L'AIDE SOCIALE)

Mr. Paul Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 60, An Act to amend the Ministry of Community and Social Services Act to establish the Social Assistance

Research Commission / Projet de loi 60, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère des Services sociaux et communautaires afin de créer la Commission de recherche sur l'aide sociale.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek like to explain his bill?

Mr. Paul Miller: This bill amends the Ministry of Community and Social Services Act to establish the Social Assistance Research Commission. The commission recommends social assistance rates and makes other recommendations about social assistance policies. The commission consists of people with expertise relevant to the commission's work.

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EATING DISORDERS AWARENESS WEEK ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR LA SEMAINE DE LA SENSIBILISATION AUX TROUBLES DE L'ALIMENTATION

Ms. Andrew moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 61, An Act to proclaim Eating Disorders Awareness Week / Projet de loi 61, Loi proclamant la Semaine de la sensibilisation aux troubles de l'alimentation.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I will invite the member for Toronto–St. Paul's to explain her bill.

Ms. Jill Andrew: The bill proclaims the week beginning February 1 in each year as Eating Disorders Awareness Week.

Understanding how the development of eating disorders, also referred to as eating problems, and access to treatment and prevention resources are influenced by structural conditions and the social determinants of health is crucial to promoting greater awareness of and providing effective education on eating disorders.

Proclaiming Eating Disorders Awareness Week in Ontario makes a powerful statement about the value of building awareness around healthy relationships with our bodies and the need for culturally relevant and responsive resources for treatments, education and prevention of eating disorders.

PROTECTING VULNERABLE ROAD USERS ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR LA PROTECTION DES USAGERS DE LA ROUTE VULNÉRABLES

Ms. Bell moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 62, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of harm to vulnerable road users / Projet de loi 62, Loi modifiant le Code de la route à l'égard des dommages causés aux usagers de la route vulnérables.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I will now ask the member for University–Rosedale to explain her bill briefly.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I'd first like to acknowledge the hard work of MPPs Bhutla Karpoche, Catherine Fife and Cheri DiNovo on this bill.

This bill amends the Highway Traffic Act. It is about the legal consequences of a collision that seriously injures or kills a pedestrian, a cyclist, a mobility device user, a roadway worker, an emergency responder outside of their motor vehicle, or another individual listed in the bill.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ONTARIO GAZETTE

Hon. Bill Walker: I'm thrilled to rise today in the Legislature for my first ministerial statement to recognize the Ontario Gazette and its long-standing value to Ontarians. This year is a special year for the Ontario Gazette, as we are celebrating its 150th anniversary. This makes it the oldest continuous government publication in the province.

As an official legal publication, the Gazette has been helping to ensure transparency and accountability in government by providing readers with access to government decisions every week since 1868.

The Gazette was first published on Saturday, March 7, 1868, printed by Henry Jervis Hartney. At the time, he was designated as "Printer to the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty."

First established by the Parliament of Ontario, the Gazette's content includes notices required by Ontario law used for legislative decisions, proclamations of new statutes and regulations made under provincial statutes. In addition, notices that must be made public are published in the Gazette.

Since the publication's launch, it has been a resource for the people of Ontario, businesses, lawyers, government employees and elected officials involved in making government decisions.

The Gazette's pages offer a first-hand account of the changes that Ontario has experienced through our province's history. For example, the initial content was geared to early settlers in Ontario. The first edition announced laws "to protect butter and cheese manufacturers" and to incorporate the first YMCA.

In 1917, the Gazette announced changes to Ontario law, permitting some women to vote—after three decades of suffrage debate. David Jamieson, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly at the time, was quoted in the Gazette as

saying, “The extension of the legislative and full municipal franchise to women is an important feature of the legislation of this session.... They will now be afforded the means of increasing the helpful and wholesome influence they have ever exercised indirectly in the past.”

The Ontario Gazette content is based on specific requirements of Ontario’s laws and regulations, and this has remained consistent over the past 150 years of print publishing. When the Gazette was first created, it was a good bet that you would hear the town crier read excerpts from the Gazette in a public setting. Before the Internet and social media, the Gazette was a good way for people across the province to connect with the work of the Ontario government. And while today there are a variety of ways for the people of Ontario to stay up to date on what is going on here at Queen’s Park, the Gazette still has an important role to serve.

With the Internet and advanced technologies, there was an opportunity for the Gazette to evolve with the times. That is why, like other government services, the Gazette is now available to all Ontarians online.

Previous issues of the Gazette can be searched online back to the year 2000, and older printed issues are indexed and available free of charge in most major libraries across the province, and of course at the Archives of Ontario.

The Gazette is poised to serve Ontarians today and into the future.

There is a great deal of work that goes into publishing the weekly edition of the Gazette. It is produced by the Queen’s Printer. The Queen’s Printer-designate is Kevin French, the Deputy Minister of Government Services. Publications Ontario is the central manager and distributor of the Gazette, as well as the distributor of all government of Ontario publications.

I extend my appreciation to all the members, past and present, of the Queen’s Printer, the Ontario Gazette, Publications Ontario and their teams for all of their efforts in the past. I congratulate the Ontario Gazette on 150 years of providing the people of Ontario with access to government decisions, expanding transparency and helping to ensure accountability. I look forward to seeing the Gazette continue to evolve over the next 150 years.

HOLODOMOR

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: It’s my pleasure today to rise on behalf of the Ontario Progressive Conservative government to inform the House that the Ukrainian Canadian Congress has set November 19 to 25 as National Holodomor Awareness Week in Canada.

The word “Holodomor” itself translates into “hunger extermination.” It’s a term commonly used to refer to the mass starvation of millions of Ukrainians by the Soviet Union in the early 1930s. It was, plain and simple, a genocide. It’s estimated that anywhere between five million and 10 million women, men and children perished without record in one of the country’s most evil and vile acts. Entire families were wiped out, villages depopulated,

and Ukraine was forcibly brought under the control of the Soviet Union.

Ukraine’s suffering continued in the post-Holodomor years. It fell under brutal Nazi occupation in World War II, only to be controlled again by the Soviet Union for many decades after the Nazis withdrew. It was only in 1991, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, that Ukraine finally became an independent member of the family of nations.

The Holodomor left a tragic mark on generations of Ukrainians. Today, we remember the millions who died in this monstrous act.

Speaker, this House unanimously passed the Holodomor Memorial Day Act in April 2009. It was the first private member’s bill of the Ontario Legislative Assembly that was sponsored by all three political parties at the time, and this reflects the support all Ontarians have for our Ukrainian friends and neighbours who lost loved ones during that time.

The former members—and I’d like to acknowledge them—who brought this historic piece of legislation were my former Progressive Conservative colleague Frank Klees; the former member from Parkdale–High Park, Cheri DiNovo; and the former Speaker of this Legislature, David Levac. Frank Klees said at the time: “A characteristic shared by all genocides is the denial by the perpetrators and their supporters that the genocides ever occurred, notwithstanding even the eyewitness accounts of the families of the victims. That’s why this occasion here is so important....”

Ontario is fortunate to have a strong and vibrant Ukrainian community that enriches our province socially, culturally and economically.

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There are large Ukrainian populations found in Toronto, Hamilton, St. Catharines, Niagara, Thunder Bay and in the city that I reside in and call home, the nation’s capital, Ottawa, as well as some other locations. This past summer, I was pleased to be able to support the Ukrainian festival in Ottawa.

Speaker, this week, we remember the tragedy of the Holodomor and pay tribute to the strength and the resilience of the people of Ukraine. We salute their ability to survive and start their new lives here in Ontario, and we share their hopes for a lifetime of peace and prosperity in Ontario and in Canada.

And we reaffirm our commitment to democracy, human rights and the rule of law to prevent another Holodomor. May we always remember those innocent victims of this horrible tragedy. May we always remember them solemnly, and may their memory be eternal.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

HOLODOMOR

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: It is an honour to stand in the House today on behalf of our leader, Andrea Horwath, my colleagues in the NDP caucus and my constituents in Parkdale–High Park to recognize Holodomor Memorial

Day, which is on the fourth Saturday of November; it falls on November 24 this year.

This year also marks the 85th anniversary of the Holodomor. Holodomor Memorial Day serves to commemorate the victims and to honour the survivors of the Holodomor. Ten million Ukrainians—men, women and children—died from a forced famine under the Soviet dictatorship of Joseph Stalin from 1932 to 1933, and millions more were executed or exiled decades after Stalin's reign continued.

Speaker, let me be very clear: This was an act of genocide.

Holodomor Memorial Day also serves to raise awareness and educate the people of Ontario and Canada of this genocide of the Ukrainian people.

I've had the opportunity to visit various Toronto stops of the Holodomor tour. I also had the honour of joining the Ukrainian community more recently for the unveiling of Toronto's Holodomor Memorial Parkette. The statue serves as a permanent memorial for the victims and survivors of the Holodomor. Speaker, it was moving to hear the experiences of the survivors.

I encourage everyone in this House, and all Ontarians, to visit the memorial, which is displayed at the Princes' Gates on the Exhibition grounds. Take a moment to remember the atrocities of the Holodomor. Take a moment to remember the victims and the strength and resilience of the Ukrainian people.

Speaker, as was mentioned, the Ukrainian community, particularly the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and League of Ukrainian Canadians, played an integral part in making sure that we recognize this day. I also want to thank all my Ukrainian Canadian constituents for their hard work. It was because of their work that, in 2009, the Holodomor Memorial Day Act received unanimous support from members from all sides, and passed as the first tri-party bill in Ontario's Legislature. I am proud to have been involved in this bill early on, working together with my predecessor, the former MPP for Parkdale–High Park, Cheri DiNovo. We also worked together to ensure that the Holodomor was included in Ontario's school curriculums.

Finally, let us remain committed to honouring the victims and survivors of the Holodomor. Particularly here in Ontario, many of us have not personally experienced such horrifying acts of tyranny or famine, which is why remembering the Holodomor and honouring the resilience of the millions affected is so important. We are both lucky and proud that Ontario is a place of safety and opportunity, where we value equality as a fundamental principle of this province. Therefore, Speaker, we must not turn a blind eye to tyranny, and by understanding the genocides of our past, we hope to ensure that similar acts never happen again.

HOLODOMOR

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Ça me fait plaisir de me lever au nom du caucus libéral pour reconnaître, moi aussi, l'importance de la célébration de Holodomor Memorial Week. I think today what we do, and this week what we remember, is we honour our “devoir de mémoire,” our

duty to memory. That's the only way that we can protect ourselves from engaging again as human beings in cruel, demeaning, genocidal acts.

I am proud to have been part of a government that was committed to ensuring that all students in Ontario would know about the Holodomor and remember the importance of standing up against hate. This is an obligation that we have as a Legislature, and we must continue to honour that duty of memory.

PETITIONS

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Jill Andrew: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the residents of Toronto–St. Paul's. This petition is to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

“Don't Take Away Our \$15 Minimum Wage and Fairer Labour Laws.

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Protect workers' employment status, pay and benefits when contracts are flipped or businesses are sold in the building services sector;

“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; and

“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 will forever proudly affix my signature to this petition and hand it over to Rham.

VETERANS MEMORIAL

Mr. David Piccini: I am pleased to table a petition from constituents of mine entitled “Petition in Support of Constructing a Memorial to Honour Our Heroes.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas over 40,000 Canadian Armed Forces members served in the war in Afghanistan including the 159 Canadians who made the ultimate sacrifice; and

“Whereas the Premier made a commitment to the people of Ontario to build a memorial” to honour their bravery and sacrifice; and

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“Whereas, by remembering their service and sacrifice, we recognize the values and freedoms these men and women fought to preserve; and

“Whereas the memorial will show our gratitude to our veterans, their families and to their descendants; and

“Whereas the memorial will be a place of remembrance, a form of tribute, and an important reminder to future generations of the contributions and sacrifices that have helped shape our country;

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

“That the government of Ontario immediately construct the memorial to honour the heroes of the war in Afghanistan.”

It gives me great pleasure to affix my signature to this petition and hand it to this fine young gentleman, page Alex.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

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

“Whereas we, as a community, have not been consulted at all by our current provincial government regarding revisions to social assistance that will come after completion of the government’s ‘100-day review.’ As a result of our exclusion in this decision-making process, scheduled to end Nov. 8, any changes that are made to our social assistance programs will not include input from the very people who are at their very core, know the most and are the most affected by these programs. Our government can and must do better;

“Whereas members of our community were consulted on recommendations to forming a clear path forward to social assistance and income security reform. These recommendations were put forward October 2017 in Income Security: A Roadmap for Change. They spelled our truths, addressed some of the most difficult corners of the system, while still staying very conservative in terms of the proposed rate increases.... Regardless, we were still going to be well below the poverty line for a while;

“Whereas before the June 2018 elections, the Liberal government passed several recommendations from or inspired by the Roadmap, including 19 improvements to the ODSP and OW that were to start this fall. On July 31, 2018, Minister MacLeod announced that the rate increases would be cut to a one-time, cross-the-board ‘compassionate’ increase of 1.5%, and the 19 improvements were ‘on pause,’ pending the ‘100-day review’ on which our community has not been consulted;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reinstate all 19 improvements to ODSP and OW on which our community was consulted, including, but not limited to:

“—3% increase to basic needs and shelter rates;

“—2% increase to other allowances;

“—changing the definition of ‘spouse’—from three months of cohabitation to three years (as per family law);

“—replacing the board and lodge rate with full basic benefits;

“—doubling of the ODSP/OW earning exemption and reducing OW waiting period;

“—full exemptions of TFSAs, RRSPs, gifts and voluntary payments;

“—fully exempting in ODSP, payments from trusts or life insurance policies;

“—expansion of remote communities allowance;

“—allowing dependent adults to get OW on their own when living with family due to lack of housing.”

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

INDEPENDENT OFFICERS OF THE LEGISLATURE

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from my constituents.

“Whereas the Child Advocate, Environmental Commissioner, and the French Language Services Commissioner are independent officers of the Legislature who provide indispensable services to the people of Ontario;

“Whereas these independent officers are essential to provide oversight, hold government accountable and offer protections for the people of this province;

“Whereas each of these officers’ work has led to reforms that have been of great benefit to people;

“Whereas budgetary and investigative independence is essential for these positions to be effective and accountable to the public;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reinstate the Child Advocate, Environmental Commissioner and the French Language Services Commissioner as stand-alone independent offices with all their prior duties intact.”

I support this petition, will sign it and ask that it be taken to the Clerks’ table.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Dave Smith: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Justin Trudeau government is not doing enough to protect the people of Ontario from convicted terrorists; and

“Whereas safety, security and peace of mind is of the utmost importance to the Ford government; and

“Whereas Ontario residents who have not been convicted of criminal acts could find themselves unable to gain access to various privileges they enjoy; and

“Whereas there are no provisions to prevent convicted terrorists from accessing privileges in Ontario;” and

Whereas every single member of the NDP voted against this bill in second reading;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 46 and disallow anyone convicted of a crime under section 83 of the Criminal Code of Canada and any international treaties that may apply from receiving:

“(1) a licence under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997;

“(2) health insurance benefits under the Health Insurance Act;

“(3) a driver’s licence under the Highway Traffic Act;

“(4) rent-geared-to-income assistance or special needs housing under the Housing Services Act, 2011;

“(5) grants, awards or loans under the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act;

“(6) income support or employment supports under the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997;

“(7) assistance under the Ontario Works Act, 1997;

“(8) coverage under the insurance plan under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.”

I emphatically support this petition, will affix my name to it and give it to page Andrew to bring to the table.

CURRICULUM

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

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

I fully support this petition, will sign my name to it and give it to page Alex.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

“To Ensure the Safety of Residents of Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Justin Trudeau government is not doing enough to protect the people of Ontario from convicted terrorists; and

“Whereas safety, security and peace of mind is of the utmost importance to the Ford government; and

“Whereas Ontario residents who have not been convicted of criminal acts could find themselves unable to gain access to various privileges they enjoy; and

“Whereas there are no provisions to prevent convicted terrorists from accessing privileges in Ontario;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 46 and disallow anyone convicted of a crime under section 83 of the Criminal Code of Canada and any international treaties that may apply from receiving:

“(1) a licence under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997;

“(2) health insurance benefits under the Health Insurance Act;

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“(3) a driver’s licence under the Highway Traffic Act;

“(4) rent-geared-to-income assistance or special needs housing under the Housing Services Act, 2011;

“(5) grants, awards or loans under the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act;

“(6) income support or employment supports under the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997;

“(7) assistance under the Ontario Works Act, 1997;

“(8) coverage under the insurance plan under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.”

Speaker, I affix my signature and pass this on.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Jamie West: These petitions were collected by Mrs. Myfawny McIntosh from the riding of Sudbury.

“Save the Breast Screening and Assessment Service.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Premier Doug Ford promised that there would not be cuts to nurses’ positions; and

“Whereas in Sudbury we have already lost 70 nurses, and Health Sciences North is closing part of the Breast Screening and Assessment Service; and

“Whereas cuts to the Sudbury Breast Screening and Assessment Service will result in longer wait times, which

is very stressful for women diagnosed with breast cancer; and

“Whereas cuts to the Sudbury Breast Screening and Assessment Service will only take us backwards;

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

“Provide adequate funding to Health Sciences North to ensure northerners have equitable access to life-saving programs such as the Breast Screening and Assessment Service.”

I will affix my signature and give it to page Kidan.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. David Piccini: Mr. Speaker, my petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, to ensure the safety of residents of Ontario.

“Whereas the Justin Trudeau government is not doing enough to protect the people of Ontario from convicted terrorists; and

“Whereas safety, security and peace of mind is of the utmost importance to the Ford government; and

“Whereas Ontario residents who have not been convicted of criminal acts could find themselves unable to gain access to various privileges they enjoy; and

“Whereas there are no provisions to prevent convicted terrorists from accessing privileges in Ontario;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 46 and disallow anyone convicted of a crime under section 83 of the Criminal Code of Canada and any international treaties that may apply from receiving:

“(1) a licence under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997;

“(2) health insurance benefits under the Health Insurance Act;

“(3) a driver’s licence under the Highway Traffic Act;

“(4) rent-geared-to-income assistance or special needs housing under the Housing Services Act, 2011;

“(5) grants, awards or loans under the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act;

“(6) income support or employment supports under the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997;

“(7) assistance under the Ontario Works Act, 1997;

“(8) coverage under the insurance plan under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.”

Mr. Speaker, I proudly affix my signature to this petition and give it to our fine page Zoe.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in her office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim):

The following is the title of the bill to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, the Labour Relations Act, 1995 and the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009 and make complementary amendments to other Acts / Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d’emploi, la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail et la Loi de 2009 sur l’Ordre des métiers de l’Ontario et l’apprentissage et apportant des modifications complémentaires à d’autres lois.

OPPOSITION DAY

CANCER TREATMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I move the following motion:

Whereas 86,000 Ontarians are diagnosed with cancer every year, half of Ontarians will develop cancer in their lifetimes, and one in four Ontarians will die from cancer;

Whereas innovative new therapies allow cancer patients to take medication orally at home instead of having to visit the hospital for lengthy IV treatments, but the cost of these oral medications are not covered by OHIP;

Whereas British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba cover the cost of take-home cancer drugs;

Whereas the majority of new cancer treatments being released are treatments patients can take at home, but Ontario’s current drug programs offer only limited access to those newer medications;

Therefore, the Legislative Assembly calls on the government to ensure universal access to take-home cancer drugs so no Ontarian has to pay out of pocket for life-saving treatment.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You’re going to have to reread this fourth paragraph.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Sorry, Speaker. I missed a piece, apparently, of the motion:

Whereas many take-home cancer treatments can be more effective, yet the lack of coverage under Ontario’s current drug program forces people to accept less effective treatment if they cannot afford to pay out-of-pocket;

Therefore, the Legislative Assembly calls on the government to ensure universal access to take-home cancer drugs so no Ontarian has to pay out of pocket for life-saving treatment.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thanks very much for correcting that.

Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 4. Back to Ms. Horwath.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It’s my great pleasure to rise to speak to the motion that we’ve tabled in the Legislature today. Folks may know that yesterday our caucus, in particular my colleague the member for Nickel Belt, who is also our health critic, had the pleasure of welcoming health advocates from Gilda’s Club, CanCertainty and the Canadian Cancer Society to the Legislature. These folks

took time from their important work, educating the public and advocating for and supporting those living with cancer, to come to Queen's Park to speak to the urgency of this motion that I'm putting forward today.

I just want to say, before we get into the larger debate—and I'm hoping that the members opposite are listening—that these are people who advocate, day in and day out, for people who are living with cancer or family members of people who are surviving with cancer. These are people that provide emotional support, people that provide education and people that are experts—experts, Speaker, frankly—in this particular area.

When cancer strikes, it doesn't take into account who it is that you are. Cancer is not discriminatory in terms of who is impacted. It doesn't discriminate in terms of how much money you make. Cancer touches all of our families, and the families in the communities that we all represent around this province. We all know what it's like to see it threaten the life of a friend or a loved one. That's how pervasive this disease is: Literally none of us have not in some way been touched by this disease, and of course receiving a cancer diagnosis is one of the scariest things any family has to navigate.

The good news is that thanks to the tremendous work of researchers, scientists and health care professionals, cancer treatments are getting better and more effective every day. Treatments many of us could not have imagined even a decade ago are literally saving lives today, and treatments that used to be available only inside a hospital are now accessible at home with take-home cancer drugs. But there's a hitch, which we'll talk about through the course of this debate. The fact is that too many people who need those take-home cancer drugs are struggling to get them, because they're struggling to afford them. As if a cancer diagnosis wasn't enough, then you find out that the prescription that's prescribed for you by your doctor is something you cannot afford.

1600

Speaker, I first had the privilege of meeting Dani Taylor in April. Dani joined us yesterday at Queen's Park to share her particular experience. Dani is a program coordinator for the GTA chapter of Gilda's Club, a truly inspiring community-based organization that supports people with cancer, their families and friends. Of course, it's named after a beloved comedienne from Ontario named Gilda Radner, who many of us enjoyed, particularly in her years at Saturday Night Live but in other initiatives as well—an amazing artist, a hilarious human being, whose life was tragically cut short by cancer.

Local chapters of Gilda's Club provide meeting spaces for folks, for family members and people living with cancer and resources for people living with cancer or affected by cancer. They provide these supports and resources, so that people can build community in the face of their illness and strengthen the social supports that they need to be able to undertake the battle—literally—for their lives.

As a young person early in her career, Dani had already done so much to care for and support people in her

community. She continues to do that work. And yet, Dani's experience of our health care system has been nothing like the support that she has so readily given to others, tragically. When Dani was diagnosed with stage 3 colorectal cancer at the age of 23, she was working part-time. She was a 23-year-old out of post-secondary, working part-time and trying to pay her OSAP loans. She had no health coverage for take-home drugs.

Every two weeks, she had to travel an hour each way to get to London for her treatments, because, of course, without being able to take the take-home drugs because she couldn't afford them, she had to go to hospital to get the IV treatments. She told me how stressful it was to have to apply for the Trillium Drug Program to try to get some help in covering the costs and how hard it was to wade through piles and piles of paperwork while she was fighting cancer.

It was tragic to hear Dani's story, Speaker. She talked about feeling like being in the worst position she has ever been in in her life and being forced by her government to jump through all kinds of hoops, when all she really should have been doing was taking care of herself and trying to get better. But she did have to do that. She had to wade through paper and she had to jump through the hoops, just so that she could get the help that she needed.

She explained how the stress of all this actually prolonged her treatment. She talked to me about how it took two months—two months—for her to actually get coverage for the drugs that she needed; two months while fighting cancer; two months while the cancer was eating away at her body. Can you imagine going to bed at night, knowing that you've got to fight to beat this horrible disease, that it's going to be literally the fight for your life, but there's nothing you can do until the coverage comes through?

Mr. Speaker, when I met Dani, I also met Sharon Dennis. During her initial cancer treatment, Sharon suffered severe complications. As a result of the complications from her initial treatment, she was prescribed oral cancer drugs instead, drugs that weren't covered by OHIP. Sharon was fortunate enough to have workplace insurance that did cover the drugs, but they would only reimburse her for the cost. They wouldn't pay up front for the cancer drugs.

Sharon couldn't afford to pay out of pocket. She didn't have that kind of money to allow her to actually pay for the drugs out of pocket and await reimbursement, because those drugs cost \$5,000 a month—\$5,000 a month. There are people in Ontario who don't earn \$5,000 a month in wages—and, of course, this government has made that worse with the changes that they brought in just this morning.

Sharon was forced, while she was battling cancer, to scramble to find the money. I remember talking to Sharon about how horrifying it was for her to ask anybody and everybody she knew to help her to try to come up with the money to try to save her life. With all of this stress and the delays, Sharon suffered even further complications of her disease. She ended up going months without treatment.

Yesterday, we were also joined by Daniel Glazerman, who bravely told his story. Daniel is in his mid-forties and has two young children. He was diagnosed with a rare type of lymphoma. He's now in remission, but he was here to say that he's worried every day about what will happen if his cancer comes back. Imagine that—worrying every day, mid-forties, with young kids. Imagine getting some of the worst news anyone could possibly get. Imagine having to fight for your life against cancer. Imagine having to jump through hoops to get the care that you need. Then imagine that, after getting better, you still have to wonder every day, "If it comes back, will I have access to the drugs that I need to fight it again?"

Mr. Speaker, we have to do better for these people and their families. We have to do so much better for these people and for their families. We have to do better for all Ontarians, because we know that cancer touches all of us and that these stories I've shared, although unique to these individuals, are repeated over and over again in all of our communities around this province. We know that cancer is the leading cause of death in Ontario, that there are an estimated 86,000 new diagnoses each and every year, that one half of Ontarians will develop cancer in their lifetime. But our current system still forces people who are already fighting for their lives to jump through hoops before they can access the latest, most appropriate treatments.

As we've heard from so many Ontarians like Dani, Sharon and Daniel, if you don't have drug coverage, you can face huge out-of-pocket expenses and costs for the take-home drugs that you need. You can face long, long delays before starting treatment. Those costs and delays add up. It puts people under more stress, of course, when they already have enough—plenty—to worry about with their diagnosis.

Now, I've got to say, Speaker, after 15 years of the previous government, this problem should have been fixed. This problem should absolutely have been fixed for people. But instead, the previous Liberal government let it get worse, with cuts and neglect to our hospitals and our health care system. Year after year, we saw cancer treatments improve, and we saw the Liberals sit on their hands and do nothing. They did not improve coverage. They did not improve peoples' access.

Now we're seeing the Premier and his government that we currently have promise to take Ontarians who need access to life-saving treatments from a bad situation to even worse. One of the first things this Premier did was cut \$330 million from funding for desperately needed mental health services and care. In his first fall economic statement, he made \$3.2 billion in cuts to the things that families count on. Most worrying of all, this government cut right to the heart of what we all hold dear as Ontarians and Canadians by delivering ominous warnings about the future of universal health care in our province.

Now, I've said this before and I'm going to say it again: I guess the Conservatives missed that whole "famous Canadian" thing that we did across our country a couple of years ago, because the most famous Canadian, the most beloved Canadian, happened to be an NDP politician who

brought us universal medicare across our country. I just want to say to the governing party, which likes to rely on votes particularly from seniors, that it was those seniors who supported Tommy Douglas and medicare all those years ago and who will be livid if this government starts to erode our medicare system in the province of Ontario.

1610

I have to say, the Premier's fall economic statement specifically said that he's reviewing the Ontario Drug Benefit Program. I can tell you that seniors are very, very nervous about what this government might do to the Ontario Drug Benefit Program, because we saw, when the Liberals tried to mess around with seniors' drug benefits, that they got a huge pushback, with us as the New Democratic Party pushing along with them, and they had to beat a track backwards to make sure they could calm people down. So I would suggest that this government and their Premier think twice about messing with Ontario's drug benefit program. It just shows that Mr. Ford was not listening during the election campaign, because these are not the things that people wanted to see. In fact, they wanted to see more supports for the things that their families count on the most, particularly their health care system. What they got instead is a Premier who looks like he's bent on taking us from bad to worse—from bad to worse.

But do you know what? We all know here that it doesn't have to be this way. It absolutely does not have to be this way. We can do so much better for the people of Ontario, and we have to do better so that, as they say at Gilda's Club, we can have a situation in our province where "no one faces cancer alone."

We can listen to Dani's and Sharon's and Daniel's stories, and to the stories of millions of Ontario families, and we can make sure that everyone facing a cancer diagnosis gets the cancer treatment that they need. With this motion, we can make sure that cancer patients never suffer alone, not knowing if they can afford their treatment. We can fund the take-home cancer drugs that people need. Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and BC all do this already. There is no reason why Ontario shouldn't be doing the same. In fact, Ontario must do it too. Instead of leaving families to worry about the cost of treatment, we can give people hope, we can give people time and we can give people peace of mind.

I am urging all members of this Legislature to support this motion, and I'm calling on the government to act on this issue right now because, together, we can send a vital message to every single Ontarian facing a cancer diagnosis: You are not alone. You will get the treatment you need, and you will get it right away, no matter how much money is in your bank account.

If we pass this motion and stand up for people battling cancer, we will also help to reduce the strain on our hospitals by freeing up resources for other patients in hospital.

This is a big first step that we can all take together today to build a stronger, more prosperous and more caring Ontario. We can deliver better health care for every

Ontarian, we can make Ontario a more affordable place to live, and we can start today with this motion.

I thank you all very, very much, and I look forward to hearing the rest of the debate this afternoon.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to discuss and debate this important issue, as well as share some of the steps that our government is taking to build a stronger health care system for all Ontarians.

I have to start by correcting the record: We have not cut any money out of the health care system, and the Leader of the Opposition knows that's true. The Liberals, of course, made promises that they could not keep, that they had no money to fund in this area and in many other areas. That isn't a cut; it's just the reality.

Unfortunately, over the past 15 years the previous Liberal government failed to develop a comprehensive health care strategy, and we are seeing the results of that today with health care being delivered in hallways while a significant number of beds are occupied by patients waiting for alternate level of care.

I should also just point out before I move on that this government has saved \$3.2 billion in program expenses by finding efficiencies without a single job cut, tax hike or reduction in front-line services. This government has done this while providing individuals, families and businesses \$2.7 billion to put back in their pockets. That is how hard and effectively we are working to try to make life more affordable for Ontarians.

Our government is committed to listening to doctors, to nurse practitioners, to personal support workers, to patients and to other individuals on the front lines of our health care system to ensure that all patients receive the highest quality of care here in Ontario. I can assure all members, Speaker, that this commitment extends to all cancer patients in this province as well.

We know that many people living with cancer would rather be treated in their own homes and we want to make sure that all Ontarians have access to take-home treatments when deemed appropriate by their doctors, but we believe that a universal access program is not the most effective or efficient way to make this happen.

There are a number of situations where the cost of take-home cancer drugs can be covered under private insurance policies held by Ontarians. For those who do not have coverage under a private plan, many take-home cancer drugs are covered under Ontario's public drug programs, including the Trillium drug benefit.

In fact, it's important to note that Ontarians spend close to \$1 billion a year on cancer drugs and supportive therapies, and \$543 million of that is spent on take-home cancer drugs.

I want to assure Ontarians that if they need take-home cancer remedies, our government will work to make them available. We want to continue working to expand access to new and innovative treatments coming on to the market.

Ontario's public drug programs cover over 4,400 drugs for nearly eight million Ontarians for a variety of acute and

chronic conditions, including many take-home cancer medications. Most importantly, our drug programs are designed to do this in an effective and sustainable way.

As a cautionary tale of why a universal program is not necessarily the best solution to ensure all Ontarians have access to the treatments they need, I want to briefly remind this House about some of the lessons we learned from the OHIP+ program.

The program, introduced by the previous Liberal government, went into effect on January 1 of this year—2018—but it quickly created just as many problems as it was intended to solve. You see, many—but not all—of those who were covered under the new OHIP+ program already had coverage under a private health insurance plan. For many minor children, this was through their parents' benefits plans, while many young adults were covered under mandatory plans provided by their employers or by their university or college student unions.

Many of these individuals with private coverage actually had more extensive coverage under their private plans than they received after January 1 under OHIP+ in terms of the number of medications that were covered. But when the Liberal government decreed that OHIP+ was to be the first payer for all Ontarians under the age of 25, many young Ontarians or their parents found themselves struggling to access medications that they were previously covered for, leading to extra paperwork and frustration in trying to get those medications covered.

In fact, I heard about these problems—I'm sure my friends opposite did as well—at the door while we were door-knocking and canvassing during the election. In my own riding I heard about this in Eglinton–Lawrence. I remember knocking on one door and I spoke with a young woman in an apartment building who had been getting asthma medication covered under her plan with her university. Under OHIP+, her asthma medication was not covered and she needed it to breathe, which is kind of important.

1620

So some of these solutions may look like solutions but may not actually be solutions. We need to be careful to make sure what we're doing is actually giving value to Ontarians. That's what we're focused on. The Liberal government took on an unnecessary expense through OHIP+ of providing medication to Ontarians who already had coverage, who were facing little or no out-of-pocket expense that they couldn't cover because they had the plans and they had those medications covered. After 15 years of decisions like that, supported by the opposition party, it's no wonder that we have inherited a \$15-billion deficit from the previous Liberal government.

We want to ensure that we respect every dollar we get from hard-working Ontarians and that we spend each dollar in the most effective way possible. That's why one of the first policy announcements that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, the Honourable Christine Elliott, made after taking office was announcing that we would fix the OHIP+ program to focus the resources and benefits on those who do not have existing prescription

drug benefits. Those with private coverage will have access to all of the drugs available through their private coverage, and if a young person doesn't have private coverage, they will continue to access OHIP+ just as they do today.

Nobody under the age of 25 will go without coverage in the province of Ontario, which is what was the intention, I think, of OHIP+ when it was first introduced. But as we learned when the Minister of Finance tabled the fall economic statement last week, making this one minor fix to the program saves taxpayers at least \$250 million every year. That is important because we're making sure that we can have that money and give it to the places that need it most, making sure it's applied where it's most needed. We're making sure that we continue to deliver drug coverage to young Ontarians, not just those who need it today, but also those who may need it in the future.

That's really the guiding principle behind everything we do as a government: ensuring that the programs we offer as a government are sustainable for both those who need them today and those who will need them in the future. But make no mistake: Our government is committed to building a health care system for the future. That's why we're working with partners in health care to develop a long-term transformational health care plan guided by innovation, integration and better use of technology.

I'll just conclude. In some cases, we might have people receiving cancer treatment in hospital or clinic settings; in other cases, with take-home medication. Ontario spends close to \$1 billion per year on these drugs and supportive therapies for cancer through our public programs and we intend to continue supporting those who need our support most. But a universal access program, we feel, is not the most efficient way to ensure that we provide that support. For those who have access to private coverage, they should continue to avail themselves of that coverage. For those who do not, Ontario's public drug plans, like OHIP+ and the Trillium drug benefit, will continue to be there for them. We'll continue to provide quality care while ensuring that our publicly funded drug system is available for generations to come. I can assure you that Ontarians expect nothing less of this government.

But for the reasons I've covered in my remarks today, I'm unable to support the motion before the House today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to make some submissions here today, and I look forward to hearing the thoughts and perspectives of my colleagues in the debate.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: Every single one of us has family or a friend who has suffered or died from cancer. It is such a cruel and unfair disease, and 86,000 people in Ontario are diagnosed with cancer every year.

We live in one of the richest provinces in the world. We can afford to cover people's take-home cancer medications, but we don't. We've got a two-tiered system. If you get cancer medications delivered in a hospital, this is what happens: You get your cancer medication. There are no bills, there are no forms, there's no sharing of household

income, there's no lengthy phone calls and there are no long waits. You get your cancer medication. But if you happen to be over 25 or under 65, and you're administered take-home cancer medication, then your experience is very different.

I'd like to share the experience of a woman named Becky to explain what this experience is like. Becky is a 36-year-old single mom, and she's living in Ontario. She writes:

"I was just recently diagnosed with a rare form of leukemia—chronic myeloid leukemia. My life has been turned upside down with just one blood test. I have a wonderful doctor and am being treated in a great hospital. My doctor assured me this is a very treatable disease," provided that I get access to the "fantastic drugs available that will keep this in control...."

"He wanted to start me on imatinib right away, however due to the cost it needs prior approval from the insurance company. In the meantime, I started taking" another drug while I waited for the better drug's approval.

"It took two weeks, three emails and two phone calls to the insurance company but I finally have an approval—subject to my deductible and my maximum benefit. At this time I still don't fully know the amount of out-of-pocket expense I will have as I am waiting for the insurance company to confirm at what percentage they're going to be covering the medication. The approval is also only valid until July. They are giving me six months of coverage and then I have to re-apply for the special acceptance. Not sure what will happen in July.

"Dealing with the insurance and worrying about how I am going to find the funding for this life-saving cancer drug has been one of the worst things that I have ever experienced—even worse than coming to terms with my cancer diagnosis. Hundreds of thousands of dollars are spent in cancer research to develop these drugs, to save people's lives—but what good are they for people in Ontario if we can't afford to take them? Or have to deal with the stress and financial burden?

"We live in Canada. This should not happen."

This is the reality for people who are administered take-home cancer drugs in Ontario today. Becky's story has some common threads that many patients experience. Those common threads are:

People cannot get their medication until they work out how they are going to pay for it, which means they have to wait.

It is the responsibility of the patient to deal with the insurance company, the Trillium drug fund, which means that while they're dealing with a life-threatening diagnosis, potentially, they have to do all of the phone calls and all of the paperwork while they're very, very stressed and likely going to many medical appointments.

Private insurance coverage must first be exhausted to the maximum contribution limits. What this often means is that families have no other insurance room for other family members or other medications. Not only that; it means that employer benefit programs rise in costs and small employers feel that additional cost.

Finally, patients have to pay. Even with the Trillium program, patients have to pay. It could be thousands of dollars a year to access these life-saving medications.

It just feels cruel to have a two-tiered system where it is okay to cover cancer medication in hospitals but it's not okay to cover take-home cancer medication for the up to 50% of patients who need it.

And it's not just about cancer drugs. Since coming into power, this government has made access to important medications and quality health care even harder to get. This government has cut back the OHIP+ program, which provided drug coverage to youth 25 and under. Now you're just limiting it to people who don't have health insurance. This means that small businesses and non-profits have to pay higher premiums to provide drug coverage to their employees.

1630

Before I became an MPP, I was an executive director of a non-profit that cared about paying workers a living wage and providing benefits to those who were employees. What that meant is that I had to raise additional money to provide the insurance to cover benefits for my kids, and for the employees' kids, because it's not currently covered—until the Liberals finally listened to the NDP and started moving forward with a more sensible, universal pharmacare plan.

Universal pharmacare benefits people, it benefits businesses and it benefits our health care system. Private drug coverage benefits private insurance. It is time to move forward on a universal pharmacare program so people can get their medication with their OHIP card, not their credit card. That includes take-home cancer medication. It is not too much to ask. BC covers cancer medication that's take-home; Alberta does; Saskatchewan does; and Manitoba does too. If they can do it, so can we.

Everyone who has faced a diagnosis with cancer should not have to deal with the hassle and cost of working out how to pay for their cancer medication; they should focus on getting better. That's the kind of health care system the NDP will build: one that is fair, one that is universal and one that is public. And I urge this government to do the same.

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

Mr. David Piccini: I'd like to thank all of the speakers today. I'd like to thank the honourable Leader of the Opposition for her remarks and other colleagues who have spoken to this today, all of whom have shared a number of touching and challenging stories. These stories of an increasingly strained system over the past number of years have become far too familiar to all of us today. I think I can speak on behalf of all of my colleagues here that we all encountered this throughout the campaign. Indeed, cancer touches all of our lives. I just need to look at my own family to see how much cancer has, sadly, played a role.

I'll share today why I appreciate the concerns the members opposite have expressed, but why I respectfully cannot support the motion. As someone who has worked

in health care in my previous career, I remain resolute in working with members of this Legislature across the aisle to fix an ever-increasingly breaking system, to work with our health care professionals to find sustainable solutions to fix the backlog in hallway health care, and to ensure that patients get patient-centred care and the treatments they need.

We have to look at our realities. Cancer drugs in Ontario, including many cancer products taken at home, are publicly funded by Ontario's public drug programs. In fact, as my colleague mentioned, we spend over \$1 billion per year on cancer drugs and supportive therapy, and over half of that—over \$500 million—on take-home drugs. We also know that we pay over \$12 billion in interest payments to service our debt. Think of what we could be doing. We could be doubling our funding for take-home cancer treatment. We could double spending on all health and health-related preventive supports throughout our elementary and post-secondary institutes and still have billions left over to reinvest in our health care system. Neither of these issues can be looked at in isolation. It's incumbent on us as legislators who manage the public purse, who manage the needs of our constituents while managing the realities of our current fiscal state, to look at this in a holistic manner.

Interjection: So let them all die.

Mr. David Piccini: You see, these sort of comments—"Let them all die"—do nothing to enrich debate; comments like "cutting mental health care funding"—which is actually disingenuous. Mr. Speaker, I was door-knocking the other day, talking to folks in my community. I knocked on a door and a gentleman said, "You're cutting funding to mental health," and I said, "Who did you hear that from?" He said, "I heard it from Andrea Horwath." I said, "Really?" So I took out existing funding in the last fiscal year, promised spending and the commitment we made, which was the largest commitment to mental health funding in Ontario's history. And you know what? Unlike the members opposite, my constituent understands that there's a fundamental difference between a promise and actual spending. You can't cut something that's never been funded. You can't cut a promise.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, we have a moral obligation to our next generation. Both my friend opposite and I agree that we have a moral obligation to ensure that we can deliver the vital in-hospital and in-home treatments that Ontarians depend on for generations to come—not just for this generation, but for generations to come.

As I mentioned, I've worked in health care. I know that we have to move away from a system of chronic disease management to chronic disease prevention. When I talk about chronic disease prevention, I'm talking about looking to the future. Again, we have to look at this in a complete manner, ensuring we have the resources not just to fund and support the health needs of today but for generations to come.

Speaker, we know there are currently a number of take-home cancer remedies and drugs covered under our current policies. As mentioned, the province currently spends

over \$500 million on this. We also know there are many Ontarians covered under existing policies.

We can and will continue to make sure that people who are not able to pay for their own cancer drugs, who aren't covered by a policy, continue to have access under programs like Trillium, as our Minister of Health has very eloquently said. We are committed to removing red tape and barriers. I would welcome constructive dialogue with members opposite in the NDP to discuss existing barriers and ways we can reduce red tape in this very system.

It became quite clear, as I said, in the last election that our health care system is at a breaking point—hallway health care. Over the last 15 years, I think we can both agree that the previous government, the Liberal government under then-Premier Wynne, did not make enough investments into our system, weren't making strategic investments. We can fund everything ad nauseam—but in their silos. If we don't look at this in a constructive manner—and I've spoken to health care professionals. I've worked in health care. We've been into hospitals. We've looked at it from a systemic standpoint, looking at our system and ensuring that we're making strategic investments, as I said, moving away from chronic disease management to chronic disease prevention, ensuring we have the right resources and the actual resources to make these investments.

The system has become far too bureaucratic, far too top-heavy. We had a previous government whose answer to everything was just more administrators, more VPs. We have an opposition now that presents very heart-wrenching stories. But my constituents know we all have collective stories. We all collectively must come together to address these issues. But we must do it in a fiscally sustainable manner. We do have finite resources.

Do members opposite, I wonder, understand what a structural deficit means? We know they don't. We know that you have holes and that, sadly, the failed discovery math system—the biggest example of that is the members opposite, who couldn't fix a budget or manage a budget if their lives depended on it.

I'm proud of the strategic investments—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I've been sitting rather patiently, and I've asked a couple of times that order be maintained in this House. There are a lot of different conversations going on and a few remarks that have been issued from the opposition side which are borderline. I would ask that we keep the comments—the borderline comments need to cease and I would ask that the conversations be kept to a very minimum. Thank you very much.

Back to the member.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, in a short few months, we have a Minister of Health who has worked with Ontarians and worked with health care professionals to ensure that we invested in long-term-care beds. I need only look to my own community of Norwood, of Cobourg to see the strategic investments we've made: new acute-care beds; more surge funding to alleviate

hallway health care; wraparound services for addiction, for those in need of addictions services.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, the issue here isn't just about money. We know self-administering cancer treatments at home often leaves patients struggling to cope with side effects and scrambling to find answers for an endless list of questions. When I heard that I would be speaking to this today, I spoke to a few members of my constituency who grapple with issues of safe storage, safe handling, proper dosage, possible drug interactions, side effects and other issues. Hospital and cancer care pharmacists have received specialty training on the drugs they administer. The same cannot always be said about community pharmacists.

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I read a recent article in the National Post about a husband and wife from Guelph, Paul and Marianne, who outlined the challenges that they faced trying to get their questions answered at a local pharmacy. Paul said that he was at the drugstore for over an hour, trying to find out if there were any interactions with the drugs he was already taking at home. The pharmacist had to look it up. His wife recalls the frustration they both encountered trying to get their questions answered.

Again, we have a minister who's committed to addressing this, to looking at this system. We need to look at all aspects of this. I just outlined some of the systemic challenges that we face. If we're actually interested in a constructive dialogue—not fearmongering and smearing over fake cuts, but actual constructive dialogue—

Interjection.

Mr. David Piccini: Again, I referenced members of my own community who grapple not over how to take it but over administering it. Sometimes it requires drugs, and the member opposite would know, if she spoke with them, about possible side effects and other interactions. There's a need for greater oversight and supports in administering for patients.

As I said, we've got a plan. We recognize the need to make strategic investments, cognizant of the fiscal realities we find ourselves in—and I say “fiscal realities,” a term foreign to the Leader of the Opposition, who can't even outline a proper budget in the campaign.

We want to expand on the drugs available to people, including more personalized types of medications. As I indicated in my previous comments, it's not necessary to have a universal access program as long as we have programs that make sure the people who are not able to afford them have them. We have that under the Ontario Drug Benefit Program and the Trillium Drug Program. If people need to be reassured: If they need take-home cancer remedies, they will get them.

We were elected on a mandate to fix our broken health care system. We need and must develop the right system, a system not constrained by structural deficits but empowered by innovative investments made as a result of budget surpluses. And I'll repeat that for the budget-surplus-impaired opposition: a budget surplus. Simply put, Mr. Speaker, we need to build a sustainable health care system in this province, and that is precisely what our

Minister of Health has been doing over the few short months we've been in government.

To illustrate some of that, we look at the fall economic statement putting \$2.7 billion back into the pockets of Ontarians, finding \$3.5 billion in efficiencies while not cutting anyone on the front lines—

Interjection.

Mr. David Piccini: Again, the fearmongering. I'm glad they can spell, because they sure as heck can't do discovery math.

But the strategic investments we've made—I heard the fearmongering during the campaign by the failed NDP candidate in my riding, who said we were going to cut front-line service providers. We haven't, Mr. Speaker. We found efficiencies. Do you know what? If they read the Ernst and Young report, they would see that our public service is managing efficiently, that it's the transfer payments, the writing of blank cheques, that we can no longer morally do as we look to our next generation to ensure that we have the funds available not just for cancer treatment today but for tomorrow's cancer treatments in an ever-changing economy where new treatments are there. We owe it to Ontarians to examine these treatments and to do it in a cost-effective manner before we start funding them, to look at this, to study them, and to be appropriate stewards of our government purse.

As I said, Ontarians, in historic fashion—in my riding, more votes cast for a provincial member than ever before—gave our government a mandate to be responsible stewards of the public purse, to get to the bottom not just of the fiscal mess at the government level after 15 years of reckless fiscal mismanagement, but to get to the bottom of challenges in our health care system. We have experts across government here with experience in health care, and I think and I know that we have the best health care minister, in this place, at the helm.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that our government has a responsibility to make evidence-based funding decisions on all the new drugs that come to market on a case-by-case basis. There's no one-size-fits-all. That's why evaluating this works best. We need to make sure we are building a robust system for the future. This is one of the utmost priorities for the Minister of Health.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House are interested in having a constructive dialogue with the NDP on this. We're interested in looking at making these right investments in our health care system, and would welcome actual constructive dialogue, would welcome a Leader of the Opposition who would engage in that without fearmongering, divisiveness and smearing: an actual constructive dialogue, cognizant of the fiscal realities we are in in Ontario, but acknowledging the need to make strategic investments to support those Ontarians who depend on us most. Because we're doing a fundamental disservice to those Ontarians if we, at the expense of today, are able to support them while leaving our next generation out in the cold, unable to support them with anything. That does nothing to support our children and grandchildren.

So, as I said, I would welcome a constructive dialogue with the members opposite and look forward to working with them as we tackle the backlog in our hallway health care system, as we address this under the phenomenal leadership of Minister Elliott, our Minister of Health.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I want to bring everybody back to about 2014. In 2014, Cancer Care Ontario hosted a broad consultation on take-home cancer drugs in Ontario, and they produced a report. The report is called Think-Tank Summary: Enhancing the Delivery of Take-Home Cancer Therapies in Ontario. Anybody can go on the Internet right now and access it. This report summarized the consultation and outlined ideas to improve delivery of take-home cancer therapy.

There was a follow-up to that report in 2016. That follow-up was done by the Canadian Cancer Society and the CanCertainty Coalition. They hosted a meeting with key stakeholders to identify potential solutions. Then, a discussion summary was produced in July 2017, and a round table followed with many participants, including Lymphoma Canada and the CanCertainty Coalition, which is a coalition of 35 patient groups, cancer health charities and caregiver organizations from across the country, joining together with oncologists—those are physicians specializing in cancer treatment—and cancer care professionals to significantly improve the affordability and accessibility of take-home cancer treatments. You also had, of course, the cancer society.

All of those people came to the same conclusion. The body of evidence to support universal coverage of take-home cancer drugs has been building—in Ontario, anyway—for the last four years. The body of evidence is there for universal coverage of take-home cancer drugs.

So when all of those reports came out in 2017, I got together—because I do work across the aisle—with the person who is now the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. We held a press conference because, basically, we all agree. The now Minister of Government and Consumer Services at the time was the PC critic for long-term care, seniors' affairs and accessibility issues. We held a joint press conference together. What were our asks? The ask was really clear: Ontario needs to put patients first and improve access to take-home cancer drugs. Cancer patients face unnecessary delays and emotional and financial challenges in getting their take-home cancer treatments.

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It was a call to action. Ontario had become an outlier—that was last year—because all of Canada's western provinces treat take-home cancer drugs and hospital-administered cancer drugs on an equal basis. We know that Nova Scotia is also working on it now. It was important. That was on October 25, 2017. You can google this and you will see quotes from the health critic from the Progressive Conservative party as well as myself, the health critic from the NDP, where we presented the body of evidence that supports the decision to have universal pharmacare.

Why is it that the body of evidence does not support having the government as a second payer? The government as a second payer is what we have right now. Right now, you have to first exhaust whatever means you have to pay, so that means paying out of pocket up to 4% of your family income to then qualify for Trillium. Or it means going through your own—if you're lucky enough; there's about one in four workers who get to have a drug plan through work. That means going through everything that you have before the government will step in.

This way of doing things is not working. The people who know those things way better than the politicians like me—I am just being their voice, but when you talk about the Canadian Cancer Society, they know a thing or two about cancer. When you talk about the Ontario Cancer Society, so do they. When you talk about Cancer Care Ontario, when you talk about CanCertainty, when you talk about all of the different cancer organizations, they're all speaking with one voice. They're all saying the same thing.

A universal program to cover take-home cancer drugs is not going to ruin the bank. At the worst, the economists put it at about \$42 million. The PA to the Minister of Health has already shared with us something we already know: We spend over \$1 billion the way we do it now. But the way we do it now puts people through so much stress, Speaker, that it is not worth it. Let's say you and your husband—or your spouse—make about \$60,000. You would have to have spent \$2,400 before you can apply to Trillium. If you figure out how to apply the right way the first time—which does not happen very often—it will be a good six to eight weeks before they answer you back. You qualify for Trillium, and then you apply for the specific cancer drugs—and more delays.

Speaker, there are drugs right now for many cancers that do wonders, that will change the way you feel, the way you will have more energy. You will feel better. You don't have to go through intravenous chemotherapy that makes you sick anymore. They are very life-changing drugs. But a lot of them are very expensive, up to \$120,000 a year. That's \$10,000 a month. There are no local pharmacies who will front you four months' worth of medication when it costs \$40,000 while you wait for Trillium and everybody else to figure things out. In the end, the government will pay.

All we're saying is, listen to the evidence. Read the body of evidence that comes from experts—not from politicians—who tell you that universal access to our take-home cancer drugs will help. The stats have already been shared, but it is worth repeating: 86,000 people. That means there are people in each and every one of our ridings who face those challenges. This is each and every day. Half of Ontarians will get a diagnosis of cancer. You look at 124 of us; there will be half of us who will be diagnosed with cancer and one out of four will die of this disease.

It is worth looking at this with a set of eyes that says, "Let's do the right thing." Let's do the right thing based on science, let's do the right thing based on a body of

evidence and let's do the right thing for the people—many, many of us—who will be facing a cancer diagnosis.

Don't get me wrong, Speaker. I don't want to send the wrong message out there. A cancer diagnosis is not a death sentence. For most people, a cancer diagnosis will be a chronic disease. It will be a disease that you have that you will get treatment for. The minute that you can be discharged out of the hospital and go home—that's the ticket that everybody wants. They want out of the hospital and to be at home with take-home cancer drugs. But that comes with the little hiccup that in the hospital your drugs are covered; once you're at home, your drugs are not.

It doesn't have to be that way. We have the power—right here, right now in this chamber—to do the right thing. The worst-case scenario, when it looks at spending, is \$42 million. Yes, this is a lot of money, but it's money that we will end up spending anyway, Speaker. We just do it with delays, we do it with a ton of bureaucracy, and we do it with a ton of heartache for people who are at a time in their lives when really they could get a hand up from their government rather than a book that thick that they have to fill out so that they see if they qualify or not for their health.

I hope that people from across the aisle will go talk to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, because he has seen the body of evidence. He stood beside me and asked, at the time, the Liberal government to do the right thing and cover take-home cancer drugs, to have universal access, not a program where the government is the second payer, but a program where people don't have to worry. You do the transition—in my cancer treatment system, you ring a bell when it is your last treatment and you get to go home. People in Sudbury and in many other cancer treatment centres will ring that bell and go home, knowing full well that they will continue to have access to the drugs that they were taking without having to worry about paying for them.

I could go on and on, because this is an issue that is very meaningful to me and to a lot of people. I hope you will look at the evidence. I hope you will talk to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, and I hope that you will do the right thing.

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

Mr. Ross Romano: I'm very happy to rise today and speak to the motion from the opposition leader. I think it's a very important issue. I recognize the importance of the issue raised by the opposition member. I think that the goal of wanting to provide cancer medications, and all cancer medications out there, to all is a noble thought. However, we have a responsibility, at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, to make evidence-based funding decisions for all new drugs that come to the market, on a case-by-case basis.

We already provide funding for cancer patients. In fact, we spend close to \$1 billion every single year—almost \$1 billion—on cancer drugs and supportive therapies. We spend \$543 million just on take-home cancer drugs. This is not something that we do not fund at all. In fact, our

public drug programs in Ontario cover 4,400 drugs for nearly eight million people in this province. Many of these, of course, are cancer medications.

If you look at our situation in this province, we are in a very difficult position financially. Mr. Speaker, as you're well aware, I'm a member of the Select Committee on Financial Transparency. We learned from the commission of inquiry. They told us that the financial situation in Ontario today is worse than it was during the 2008 recession. You've got to think about that for a moment. You've got to gauge that.

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Our health budget in Ontario is over 40% of the entire provincial budget. Over \$61 billion every year in Ontario goes to health care. It's a necessary expense. It is important that we provide solid, reliable, good health care services to the people of our province. As was noted earlier, it was one of the principal things that we spoke about in the campaign. It was one of the principal reasons why we have been elected to govern this province, because the health care situation in Ontario has been neglected by the former government for far too long.

I have people in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie, and I'm not going to say their names, because they are dealing with some very personal issues. I have someone who was involved in my campaign, as a matter of fact. He was telling me a story about how he went to the doctor with his wife. His wife wasn't feeling well. She went to see her doctor. It took six months to get a follow-up appointment. They couldn't figure out what was wrong. They treated her for one thing. They came back after the six months and got the tests back. They said that it wasn't that, so they tried something else. They said, "Well, maybe it's this."

They came back six months later: "No, it's not that." Finally, he said, "I'm done. I can't take this anymore." He grabbed his wife, and he said, "You know what? We have the ability to do this. I'm going to take you. We're going to go down to Rochester." Within 48 hours, she was put through a number of tests. They determined that she had cancer. She was already at stage 3.

We have so many problems in our health care system. We all have stories. Everyone knows someone who has dealt with our health care system. I'm sure all of the members from northern Ontario could tell you some really, really scary stories. I know many members from the opposite side could tell me significant stories of health care tragedies they heard in the north. We have health care tragedies of people getting treatment in hallways. We hear these things all the time.

But if \$60 billion-plus of our budget in Ontario goes to health care alone, and of that, a billion already goes to medication for cancer patients—would we love to be able to do everything? Absolutely. But we need to look at things on a case-by-case basis. That's all we're saying. We already fund and cover 4,400 drugs. We don't know what some of these drugs are. We don't know their efficiency. We don't know their reliability. We don't know if they work. Should we just fund everything?

I'm not going to make this partisan. I'm not.

Would it be nice? Absolutely. But can you do it, legitimately? Can you legitimately fund everything? No, you can't.

We already have, in Ontario, a \$342-billion or \$348-billion deficit—I don't know how I forgot that number.

Mrs. Robin Martin: It's \$348 billion.

Mr. Ross Romano: Thank you—\$348 billion.

We pay over a billion dollars a month in interest payments. I know everyone is going to say, "Oh, here we go again. Talk about debt. Talk about debt. Talk about debt."

I have three little kids. I've got four- five- and six-year-old boys at home.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I bet they're cute.

Mr. Ross Romano: They are exceptionally cute. They take after their mother.

Who is going to cover this? Who is going to pay this deficit? In 1990, our deficit was only in the \$30-billion range. Look where we have come. We currently, unfortunately, are fortunate that the interest rates are what they are. What happens if the interest rates go up? Because, you know what, they will. You don't need to be an economist to know that interest rates are not going to stay at the rate they're at right now, at 2% or something like that.

Minister Hardeman, your first mortgage, I bet you were paying, what, 18%?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Something like that, yes.

Mr. Ross Romano: What happens to Ontario when interest rates go up? Forget about 18%. What happens if they double to only 4.5% or 5%? What are we going to do then? What are we going to do when our payments on our debt are \$2.2 billion a month? What are we going to afford to do anymore? We just can't fund everything.

Hey, I would love to try. Again, I've got three kids at home. When I go to the store with my kids, they say, "Daddy, I want that and I want that." Well, I've got three kids, so if I buy one kid the Captain America figurine, I've got to buy all three of them one. In my house, I've got to buy one Captain America, one Iron Man and one Incredible Hulk.

Interjection.

Mr. Ross Romano: Thank you, member from Windsor.

Then they're going to say, "Well, daddy, I also want an ice cream." "Okay, I'll buy you an ice cream too. All right. Hey, do you want it?" "Absolutely." But sooner or later, something's got to give. I can't buy them everything.

If I'm really going to be reasonable in how I administer—because at the end of the day, we've only got so much money spread to go around. In Ontario, we've only got about \$187 billion to play with. If we already spend over \$60 billion on health, and of that we already spend about a billion on our medications for cancer alone, so what about everything else? Do you know what? If you want to fund everything and if the bar is going to be set that we should fund every single medication, even the ones that we barely know anything about—because that's what this motion is. If that's where the bar gets set, we're going to put that bar right up here. So is everybody else not going

to also—like, why can't we fund every single medication? I've got diabetes or I've got—I'm not going to go through a long list of items. But then should we also fund everything? Something's got to give.

I applaud the opposition leader for putting together a motion that will really pull at a lot of people's heartstrings. And you know what? It's a very, very sad reality—it is—but you can't have everything. We just can't. Unfortunately, someone has to be the adult in the room, and someone has to play the parent once in a while and say, "Sorry. You can't have everything. You just can't." That's the world we live in. That's the situation we're in.

You all on that side of the room who were here in opposition last year—I was only here for a short period of time—I heard you as well on numerous occasions, and I've heard many of you say it since then, that we had on this side of the room, for 15 years, a government that spent like drunken sailors and still left—

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Don't insult the sailors.

Mr. Ross Romano: Yes, don't insult the sailors. I'm sorry for those poor sailors; they don't deserve it.

They spent to the point that we are presently today \$15 billion in the hole—well, not after our Minister of Finance has taken hold of the reins in only a few short months. But we have a \$15-billion deficit. Sometimes people don't want to put that into perspective, what that really means. What's \$15 billion? From what we knew it was supposed to be, \$6.7 billion, plus the \$8.3 billion, whatever that is now that we're here, like over \$8 billion. With less than \$8 billion—I'm going to bring this just specifically to health care. Just give this some consideration for a moment, what \$8 billion buys you. We currently, in Ontario, have 33,080 people on waiting lists to get into a long-term-care bed. They matter too, don't they? They're pretty important.

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Mrs. Robin Martin: They are.

Mr. Ross Romano: Yes. So those are 33,080 people in Ontario presently on a waiting list to get into a long-term-care bed. If we wanted to fund the beds for all 33,080 of those people, and all the staff that goes along with it, for the full four years of this government—four full years funded, everything paid for—we could do it with less than \$8 billion. We'd have money left over. That's the difference between what the former government told us we were getting as a deficit and what we actually have. That's just the difference.

So \$8 billion: That's a lot of money. Huge. A hugely large sum of money. But we don't have that money. It's gone. We have to figure out a way to do what we can—and do you know what? I heard someone say, "Oh, you're going to give it to the rich." That is not a fair comment, not even close. I don't know what you consider to be rich. I don't know what number you seem to think that is, but that's a very unfair and uneducated way to view it, and I will say something and I'm not making it partisan: That's just a simple fact. Because, Mr. Speaker, we're talking about just cutting—through the LIFT program, we're going to have everybody in this province who makes under \$33,000 a year, 1.1 million people, not going to pay taxes.

These are the people that we are looking out for. Why aren't you looking out for them? Why don't you care?

Don't try to score cheap political wins, because you know that it's—you know, I struggle with this such a great deal because it sounds really, really good. It sounds good. It sounds great. Again, from my first opening comments, would we love to see everybody get every single possible cancer medication that comes out? Certainly. But when you don't even know what they are, when you don't even know whether or not they work, when there's not yet evidence for them—seriously? How can you make a determination like that and not do it on a case-by-case basis? All we're saying is, do it on a case-by-case basis.

In fairness, given where it's coming from, I can appreciate that and I can understand that. However, somebody has to be the adult in the room. Somebody has to decide how the money is going to be spent. And there's a very good reason why, when we talk about being \$8 billion different in one year from what the former government left us with, and we look at that side of the room and they couldn't even get a campaign budget right—they were off by over \$7 billion in one year. So, Mr. Speaker, it's pretty obvious why the people of Ontario chose to give us the keys to the car and not them.

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

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I just wanted to take a very short time to add a little bit to the debate. On September 27, I stood up in the Legislature and I acknowledged that my partner had passed away on that day six years before. Because it was just an acknowledgement, I wasn't able to provide any details of what had happened. I would like to take some time to share that story with you right now.

Michael was 46 when he died of cancer. He had been diagnosed with leukemia. We had two young children. They were four and seven at the time of his death.

He was a professor at York University, and he had a private plan as part of his benefits plan. When we went to Princess Margaret, which provided him with amazing, absolutely phenomenal care, we were shown the amount of money for each one of the pills that he would have to take. We were talking thousands of dollars per pill that he would have to take daily while he had no immune system after receiving chemotherapy.

The first round of chemo, he had to do in hospital. We didn't have to worry about any of the drugs. The second and third round of chemo, to make sure that he stayed in remission, he did at home, which meant that when he was at home, we had to be particularly careful, but it also meant that in being particularly careful, any of the drugs that he now had to take to prevent getting sick again, because he had no immune system, he had to pay for out-of-pocket and then get reimbursed.

He was in remission for three years before he relapsed and ended up having a bone marrow transplant. The bone marrow transplant was rejected. He had another type of bone marrow transplant, and he passed away in 2012.

In 2017, last year, about October, I was looking through some of his papers and I found a letter that Michael had

written to his insurance company, because unbeknownst to me, he wasn't actually getting reimbursed for the take-home drugs. He was too proud and worried about me and worried about our children to say that he wasn't able to get the money back. So he had started a letter-writing campaign to try and make sure that he was reimbursed.

So the notion that all of the drugs are actually covered when you go home is not true. The idea that you would prefer to be in hospital where the drugs would be covered is also not really true. Because when you're dealing with a disease that leaves you with no immune system, when you're in hospital, you feel so alone and you're surrounded by others that could have any type of flu etc.—and that could be the end of your life. Going home is what they typically ask you to do.

So what happens in a situation like Michael's, a real-life situation, where he was too scared to tell me that he couldn't afford the drugs, or he could pay for them for the first bout but now he didn't know what he was going to do for the next one, because these drugs weren't covered—he was 46 years old. He had a drug benefit plan. It wasn't covered.

The amount of stress that I found out that he was living with at the end of his life leaves me feeling guilty. That's what happens to the caregivers, who are people, too. That's what happens to his children who don't have him here to speak to.

One of the letters that got sent to me on September 27 from some of my colleagues across the way included a message saying that Michael would be really proud of me for standing up in this seat and doing this after his passing. My hope is that Michael can be proud of every single person in this House when they make a decision to vote in support of the motion that has just been put through. Because I guarantee that Michael would not want to see another person in Ontario, across Canada, anywhere in the world, have to live with the stress that he had to live with, dealing with cancer, or to see the caregivers have to deal with the guilt that I live with as I sit in this House.

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

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: As you may have noticed, Mr. Speaker, I'm often fond of sharing stories in this chamber. Stories, I think, are a wonderful way to illuminate an issue. I heard a story the other day that certainly rang true when I consider the debate happening here today. There was a young boy in the neighbourhood, and he had a dog. He absolutely loved this dog. It was his pride and joy. One day, he came outside and his dog was there, and the dog had a rabbit in its mouth. It was the neighbours' daughter's pet rabbit, and the rabbit was dead in the dog's mouth.

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The boy was terrified. He thought, "My gosh, if the neighbours find out that my dog ate their pet rabbit, they're going to put the dog down. They're going to do something. It would be just awful." So the boy went and he grabbed the rabbit out of the dog's mouth. The rabbit was dirty—covered in dirt and dog slobber—so the boy went back outside and he washed the rabbit and fluffed up all the fur.

Then he carefully snuck back over to the neighbours' house and he put the rabbit back in its cage and laid it there. He figured that hopefully the neighbours would find the dead rabbit and they would think that it just passed away in its sleep of old age, and they wouldn't blame his poor dog.

The next day, the boy heard a loud knock on the door. He looked out the window, and the neighbours were standing there. He grew quite worried, and so he snuck downstairs and he listened as his mother spoke with the neighbour. The neighbour said to the mother, "You know, I have no idea what happened. I wondered if you saw anything. My daughter's rabbit died a week ago, and we buried it in the backyard. Some freak came and dug the rabbit up, cleaned it all up and put it back in the daughter's pet rabbit cage. What in the world could have happened?"

The moral of this story, Mr. Speaker, is that things aren't always as they seem. And so, I need to start by saying to the Leader of the Opposition and the opposition members who put forward this motion that I really appreciate their motive. I know that they're coming at this from a good and noble place, that they're trying to, as all of us do, work to improve the lives of people who are suffering.

I think every single person in this chamber can probably say that at some point in our lives, we've been touched by the nefarious scourge that is cancer. I know for myself, Mr. Speaker, my nan passed away from liver cancer when I was about 12 years old. My nan was always an inspiration to me, because she was quite a fighter. She went through months and months of cancer treatment. My nan liked to play tennis, and she went out and played tennis every second day. On the day she passed away, she actually got up, played a round of tennis, won, went to the grocery store, came home, laid down for a nap and passed away in her sleep. She was quite the valiant fighter.

Another good friend of mine, Cathy Holland, passed away in 2010 from esophageal cancer. Cathy had had quite a lengthy battle against cancer, and she managed to hold out just long enough to see the birth of her first granddaughter. It was nice for all of us to be able to be there with her when she shared that moment of pride, for someone who was one of the most selfless and caring people I ever met.

Before Cathy passed away from cancer, she actually got a group of us together and asked that we establish a fund in her memory to support pediatric cancer research at our local children's hospital. You see, Cathy was the kind of selfless and caring person who, even though she was in the middle of her own ferocious battle against this scourge, this villain, was still thinking about the kids from the next generation, and those who might come after her who were going to fight this battle. I've been quite honoured, Mr. Speaker, that ever since she passed away, I've held a trivia night fundraiser on my birthday. We've raised, so far, just over \$50,000 for that cancer research fund in Cathy's honour.

This just goes to say, Mr. Speaker, that I think we all recognize in this House that we all need to do our part in

fighting back against this disease that has plagued us for so long. But here's where we reach a bit of a divergence, Mr. Speaker. It's the nature of Parliament that on one side, the opposition is there to shine a light on all of these issues and to try to bring attention to them, whereas on the government side, we have the heavy responsibility of taking into account the realities of situations. It's something that I'm reminded of, when I'm in this chamber, when I look at why they put the eagle and the owl on each side. The opposition is keeping an eagle eye on the government and bringing these issues to their attention, while the government has to remember that we need to always be wise and take realities into account.

That's why we need to remember that the government needs to be considerate of sustainable solutions. We need to make sure that the money that we're putting forward onto initiatives, and the programs that we're funding and supporting, are things that we can sustain far into the future, so that future generations can benefit from those programs the same way that we have. That's the responsible thing to do.

We already, today, are spending \$1 billion on providing drug coverage to Ontarians, \$543 million of which is going to take-home cancer drugs. We're covering 4,400 drugs under this and providing coverage to over eight million Ontarians. In order to keep this sustainability going, we need to remember that we are making decisions not only for the patients of today but the patients of tomorrow.

The Macdonald-Laurier Institute has taken a look and considered some arguments for providing greater drug coverage in Canada. The argument that they have made, time and time again, is that we are much better off considering things on a case-to-case basis and being flexible in our coverage.

So let's take a look at what some of the evidence says, Mr. Speaker, because I'm always fond of looking at what the evidence says.

In the United Kingdom, they provide universal drug care coverage. They have, in the United Kingdom, a lower cancer survival rate than here in Canada, despite the fact that they have the universal coverage. Many academics have speculated that one of the causes of that lower survival rate is because the government has to do a much tighter job at rationing drugs, which has caused some of these issues that we see in jurisdictions that have pursued this policy.

In Canada right now, the figures show that around 8% of Canadians who are earning below-average incomes have trouble paying for some prescription medication. That puts us on par with Germany. However, it also puts us at a significantly lower level than three jurisdictions that provide national coverage for drug plans. New Zealand, Australia and France all have a higher level of individuals struggling to pay those costs.

In that situation, Mr. Speaker, we're looking at this and we have to ask ourselves: Is this the right solution to deal with the challenge at hand?

Things aren't always as they appear, as the story I told earlier about the dog demonstrates. On its face, saying that

we are going to provide every single person with the drug coverage that they need might seem like a nice idea, but we have to remember that we need to take into account these realities of sustainability and make sure that we're thinking about the patients of today and the patients of tomorrow.

I think that the action our government took with OHIP+ is a perfect example of this. The previous government brought in OHIP+ and said, "We're going to provide coverage to all young people," and didn't even take into account those who already had coverage.

Again, on its face, that might seem like a nice idea. Let's say that every single young person is going to get coverage, but let's take into account the realities. We're facing a significant fiscal challenge in our province, as has been mentioned many times throughout this debate and in other debates here today. So why in the world would we pay to cover everyone, when there are already folks who are receiving coverage whether through a private plan, through their parents, through their university, or through a job that they themselves have? That's the kind of smart, sustainable policy-making that we are making as a government in tackling some of these challenges.

1730

Mr. Speaker, sustainability is something that is at the heart of a lot of the different decisions that we are going to have to make over the next little while in government—decisions that we're making about our public finances. While it might be nice to spend and spend and spend on a number of new initiatives, we have to remember that we're currently leaving every single child in Ontario with \$21,000 worth of debt. Do we want to really grow that, and provide that to our future generations?

Similarly, we are going to be announcing changes to social assistance soon. Again, I have no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that when the minister announces those changes, we're going to see sustainability at the core of those reforms. Because at the end of the day, we need to make sure that future generations can rely on those supports that so many of us have had to reach out to in the past. All of these areas on sustainability remind us of the importance of taking action in those areas.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I truly commend the opposition for putting this forward and for highlighting this important issue. I read a staggering statistic the other day, that the Canadian Cancer Society is now estimating that half of all Canadians will be diagnosed with cancer at some point in their lives. That's a staggering and scary statistic that we all need to take into account. Debates like this give us an opportunity to be reminded of that fight and how we have to stay laser-focused on what matters: helping those patients today and helping those patients that are going to be diagnosed tomorrow. Sustainability; follow the evidence; and we are going to have a bright policy future.

Mr. Speaker, when my friend Cathy was fighting her battling against cancer, she thought about the next generation of kids. Even in the middle of that battle, she was thinking about those children who in the future she wanted to see cured of this terrible, terrible disease. I'm proud to

have supported her in that effort to honour her legacy, and I'm also proud to stand with my government today in making sure that the policies that we pursue are policies that are sustainable and responsible.

Mr. Speaker, I'll simply close with this: It is my hope that in my lifetime, we can see cancer defeated once and for all. That's something I think we can all agree on.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: It is an honour to rise here today and share my thoughts in favour of this motion brought forward by the leader of the official opposition. I'd also just like to take a minute to thank her for her tireless advocacy for people across this province to have access, not only to health care services and supports that they deserve, but to make sure that they get the medications that they need in a dignified manner. So thank you very much to the Leader of the Opposition for bringing this forward.

I'd also like to take a moment and thank all of the survivors, the family members, the friends and advocates who have shared their personal experiences with us. Their trauma, their hardship and their years of advocacy inform the motion that we're putting forward here today. This isn't something that we're just bringing forward without well-evidenced debate. These are things that people are asking for across this province and I would really encourage members on the opposite side to listen to the stories that we're sharing today. We all know someone—a family member, a neighbour, a friend—who has been impacted by cancer. I would encourage all members here today to think of those individuals and to think about the experiences they've had fighting and battling cancer as we debate this motion today.

Speaker, as we've heard, in Ontario, cancer is one of the leading causes of death, with an estimated 86,000 new diagnoses each year. Sadly, despite all of the medical research and advances that have been made, one in four Ontarians will still die from it.

At the age of 36, on May 26, 2017, at 6:05 a.m., my brother Marcus became one of those Ontarians as he took his last breath after a very, very valiant battle against cancer. I'll never forget the day that he received that diagnosis. In an instant, not only his life but our entire family's life changed. This is what cancer does: It changes your life in an instant—and forever. As a family, we went from celebrating and planning a wedding to trying to figure out how we were going to fight this horrible disease. I remember my brother saying that we were going to fight and we would win, and him smiling on his first day of his IV chemotherapy treatments at Credit Valley Hospital. He and everyone in our family were truly committed to making sure that we beat the odds, and we truly believed we would, as do so many people across this province. That's why they fight.

Through our journey as a family and walking with my brother, I had the opportunity to connect with patients and family members from Brampton Civic Hospital, Credit Valley Hospital, Toronto General and Princess Margaret Hospital. These people inspired us to hope and helped us

understand that with the right treatment and support, for some—for some—people in this province, it is possible to be cancer-free, be a survivor and not become another statistic. In those conversations, what I learned is that the hope of beating cancer influences every single decision that you make, not only as a patient but as a family moving forward. For many, the goal of keeping their loved ones alive is the only thing that drives them. In those moments after a diagnosis, you are at the mercy of the doctors and health care professionals around you. All you can think of is, "What do we need to do to beat this?" As you listen to the doctor recommend a course of treatment—chemotherapy, radiation, oral therapy—you have faith that if you follow the doctor's orders, you will have a chance to survive.

This is where things gets tricky for so many people in our province who just want a fighting chance: Depending on the course of treatment prescribed to you by your doctor and where you will receive it, you may be fully covered by OHIP—if you're in the hospital receiving IV chemotherapy—or you could be on the hook for thousands of dollars, if you are told that you need to take oral therapy or topical drugs, for example. Speaker, in this province, as you battle for your life, can you imagine being told that you're on the hook for \$10,000 just to save your own?

That's what David and Deirdre McMillan, for example, had to face when their 22-year-old daughter was diagnosed with a brain tumour. She was treated in the hospital for several months, then told that she was finally well enough to be discharged but would need to continue taking oral chemotherapy medication at home. I'm going to quote her father:

"We were sent to the pharmacy, and I distinctly remember someone in the room saying, 'Oh, it's expensive'...."

"I said to my daughter, 'Don't worry I have my credit card with me. Maybe it'll be \$500, \$1,000, I don't know.' We get there and we're presented with a bill for \$10,000" for just a single round of treatment.

Think about your own children. Think about your nieces, your nephews, your family members, and you receiving that news on the day that you go into a pharmacy just to access, again, medication to save their life. This is the reality for people in this province. A province as rich and prosperous as Ontario is still struggling to make sure that people get the basic care that they deserve. It is absolutely deplorable.

The reality, as Deb Maskens, who is an advanced kidney cancer patient as well as the co-founder of both Kidney Cancer Canada and the CanCertainty Coalition, highlights, is that most in this province are "blissfully unaware" of the medication costs associated with their treatment until it actually happens to a family member.

Mrs. McMillan was lucky enough to have some of her own treatments covered when she was later diagnosed with breast cancer, after her 22-year-old daughter had recovered from her tumour. Her treatments were fully covered because she received them in the hospital. So imagine having a child, on the one hand, who does not get

coverage, and then you are diagnosed at a later date and you are fully covered.

This is the disparity and the gap in our province. This motion seeks to address that, and I'm so proud to speak in favour of it.

1740

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure and a privilege to be part of a political party that is so willing to fight for universal access to life-saving medication. I just want to thank my colleagues. Our critic from Nickel Belt has been on this file for years, and she is fierce when it comes to this issue.

I know that the government has already indicated that they will not be supporting this motion. I can't tell you how disappointing that is, how regressive that decision is, how heartbreaking it will be for many Ontarians across this province. But I want people to know that between our leader, Andrea Horwath, and the team of people in the NDP caucus, we will get this done one day, without a doubt.

In fact, our health critic, on the pharmacare file—this is why it was so important for us to communicate this to people across the province during the election. If you want to be in a position of power to bring down the costs of medication and pharmaceuticals and to improve the access that Ontarians have, then you negotiate on behalf of every Ontarian. That is a position of power that you have, and that will guarantee that cancer care drugs are accessible to people. It's part of an innovative and comprehensive health care system.

The fact that we have people who go to the doctor and get a diagnosis like cancer, and then do not have access to the other half of the universal health care system—it truly is broken, and we are determined to fix it.

The members from Brampton Centre and Kitchener Centre shared very emotional stories, I have to tell you. It takes a lot of courage to share those stories. But they also admitted that they're not alone in this. In fact, we're all in this together. If there was ever a non-partisan issue, this would be it: ensuring that people have the medication they need to go home, to take cancer care medication home. Actually, the evidence, the research, the clinical studies demonstrate that the success rate is higher. People's mental health is better when they go home. They want to get out of that hospital. They want to get better; they want to get healthier. When they are with their family, those odds actually are improved.

So if this government is looking for efficiencies, we presented one right here to you.

For those of you who don't know public accounts, I chair public accounts. It's a great committee, because we put all this partisan stuff aside. We have honest conversations about what is in the best interests of the people of this province.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Right, Goldie? Two weeks ago, Cancer Care Ontario came, and this was a return of value—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: A value-for-money audit.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a value-for-money audit, and quite honestly, it was pretty astounding for us to all hear why we haven't got to this place yet.

Do you know why, Mr. Speaker? It comes down to political courage and conviction to make it happen. That's what needs to happen.

We also heard—it's pretty astounding—that 98% of the poorest people who get cancer in the province of Ontario have to go through a six- to eight-week process of paperwork, on top of the stress that they already have with the diagnosis. In the end, 98% of those applications are approved, so people will have the access to the medication in the hospital, and sometimes at home. But we're making these people jump through hoops because they're poor. The public accounts committee, to their credit, said, "Do you know what? We think that is wrong." PC members said it's wrong and New Democrats said it's wrong, because it is wrong. It is wrong.

The other piece that I want to touch on is that timing is everything. When you get a diagnosis of cancer, aside from the stress, you need to get the medical care; you need to get the medication; you need the treatment. Time is of the essence.

We already have some wait times in this province that came out through the Auditor General's report. If you get carcinoma, which is a fairly aggressive skin cancer, in Central East LHIN, you're waiting 82 days. God forbid you get cancer in the Mississauga Halton LHIN. For lungs, you're waiting 36 days for treatment. For stomach in Mississauga Halton, it's 47 days. For liver, pancreas and gall bladder in southwest Ontario, you're waiting 46 days. So you put this piece, and you add that to the layer of accessing treatment, having to apply for life-saving medication—which I can't believe the member from Sault Ste. Marie compared to getting ice cream. We are not talking about a frill here. This is a fundamental principle of how we treat each other, how we value life in the province of Ontario. These are our children, our parents, our aunts, our uncles. And it's across the entire province.

Having a streamlined, universal method where you get a diagnosis of cancer and you know that your province has your back—right now, the province of Ontario does not have cancer patients' backs when they have to go home and they don't have access to that drug. That is the reality in the province of Ontario right now.

We are trying to help you. Help us to help you. I mean, that's what we're trying to do, because we all serve the same people. We can do a much better job of honouring the lives of the people of this province who are going through their cancer journey. We can make sure they have the medication they need. The government should support this motion and make it happen.

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

I recognize the leader of the—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is the right of reply, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I understand.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm assuming that the entire debate is complete, because I can't do a right of reply without the debate being complete.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Yes. They have no further speakers. I now recognize the leader of the official opposition.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and respond to the debate that has occurred this afternoon. I have to say, I didn't think I'd get shocked by the debate that we had today, but I certainly was. My colleague from the riding of Waterloo mentioned some of the things that shocked me. But to imagine that the government side would think that somehow it's inappropriate for us here on the opposition bench to bring real stories into this Legislature about the real challenges that people are facing—I have to say, they forgot what happened a couple of months ago, when they were telling people that they were going to come here to try to represent their interests: not your interests, not the interests of your friends in the insurance industry, but the interests of everyday people. I can tell you, the way to serve the interests of everyday people is to make sure that take-home cancer drugs are available for everyone in this province.

And yes, we did talk about heart-wrenching stories. I had two of my members talk about their personal family stories, and that is not an easy thing to do. And yes, we did pull on heartstrings. We did do that, because we know how heartbreaking this disease is for everyday families in our province from one end of Ontario to the other.

What people expect is a government to help them when they are having the most difficult time in their lives. And a cancer diagnosis, which we all heard a number of times happens—one in two people in Ontario is going to get one of those. That's when the government should be there for people, not telling them, "Well, first you have to go through the trouble of your private insurance. Pay out of pocket, even though you don't have any money. Beg, borrow and steal, and try to pull every single dime you can from anybody you know to try to pay for your drugs upfront so that you can get reimbursed, maybe, at some point in the future." It doesn't work that way. People can't come up with the money, government. That's what the evidence says.

So I just want to again, as was already mentioned, talk about the facts here, the facts that come from professionals, not the silliness that comes from a member who speaks about bunny rabbits and dogs after my member tells a heart-wrenching story about her husband's battle with cancer and her kids and what they had to go through, or somebody on the government side who talks about ice cream as if it were equivalent to cancer drugs. Shame on you.

Every expert in Ontario and across Canada has not only said that take-home cancer drugs should be universally funded, but they also are saying that all drugs should be universally covered by our provinces or by our nation. Why? Because of exactly the thing that you people pretend to believe in on the government bench. You pretend to

believe in fiscal responsibility. Now, having said that, you just gave a \$300-million tax cut to the richest Ontarians; you just turned the \$4-million hydro debacle man into a \$9-million hydro debacle man; you just spent \$500,000 firing a guy who had one day on the job because your Premier doesn't like him; you just spent \$350,000 putting someone in place in Washington because your Premier does like him.

How does that help a single Ontarian who's battling with cancer, Speaker?

What we would have if you support this motion and actually put it into action is a negotiating position representing almost 14 million Ontarians that will help us wrestle the cost of cancer drugs and other drugs right down to the ground, to the point where you would be saving billions of dollars and, in fact, the employer community would be saving hundreds of millions—\$800 million—and we would have a healthier community, a healthier province, healthier people. We would take pressure off of our hospitals. All of these problems could be solved if only the Tories would see the light and do the right thing by all of the people, not just the few people that they seem to be governing for.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 4. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Get those ears checked. Just kidding.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Call in the members. There will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1752 to 1802.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Members, this is your 30-second warning to take your seats, please.

Members, please take your seats.

Interjections.

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

Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 4. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Andrew, Jill	Glover, Chris	Rakocevic, Tom
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Harden, Joel	Sattler, Peggy
Arthur, Ian	Hassan, Faisal	Shaw, Sandy
Bell, Jessica	Hatfield, Percy	Singh, Gurratan
Berns-McGown, Rima	Horwath, Andrea	Singh, Sara
Bisson, Gilles	Karpoche, Bhutila	Stiles, Marit
Bourgouin, Guy	Kernaghan, Terence	Taylor, Monique
Burch, Jeff	Lindo, Laura Mae	Vanhof, John
Fife, Catherine	Mantha, Michael	West, Jamie
French, Jennifer K.	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	Yarde, Kevin
Gates, Wayne	Morrison, Suze	
Gélinas, France	Natyshak, Taras	

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Anand, Deepak	Hogarth, Christine	Sabawy, Sheref
Babikian, Aris	Ke, Vincent	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bailey, Robert	Khanjin, Andrea	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Kramp, Daryl	Scott, Laurie
Bouma, Will	McDonnell, Jim	Simard, Amanda
Calandra, Paul	McKenna, Jane	Skelly, Donna
Clark, Steve	McNaughton, Monte	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	Miller, Norman	Surma, Kinga
Crawford, Stephen	Mulrone, Caroline	Tangri, Nina
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Pang, Billy	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Downey, Doug	Park, Lindsey	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dunlop, Jill	Parsa, Michael	Tibollo, Michael A.
Elliott, Christine	Pettapiece, Randy	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fullerton, Merrilee	Phillips, Rod	Wai, Daisy
Ghamari, Goldie	Piccini, David	Walker, Bill
Gill, Parm	Rasheed, Kaled	Yakabuski, John
Hardeman, Ernie	Roberts, Jeremy	Yurek, Jeff
Harris, Mike	Romano, Ross	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 34; the nays are 53.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): We do have—

Interjections.

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

There is additional business. For those who, because we have a late show, do not wish to be a part of the late show or to be in the late show, I'll give you a few moments to leave the assembly, please.

Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

TENANT PROTECTION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member for University–Rosedale has, in fact, given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

I now turn to the member from University–Rosedale for your up to five minutes.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Speaker. I'm here to express dissatisfaction with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing's answers to my questions last week. To reiterate, in March, Kwame Amoah was illegally evicted from his home in my riding. His new landlord forcibly removed him, his four roommates and their

belongings onto the street. Despite the police charging the landlord with assault and despite the Landlord and Tenant Board ruling that it was illegal, Kwame has been unable to return home.

The case has been appealed and Kwame must wait until the Landlord and Tenant Board rules again. Meanwhile, he's living in a homeless shelter and his mental health is suffering.

Kwame's experience is part of a very, very scary trend that we're seeing all across Toronto and in municipal centres around Ontario especially. There has been a 100% increase in the number of applications to evict good-paying tenants for reasons other than non-payment of rent, and once you are evicted, it is very difficult to find an affordable apartment in this city. The vacancy rate in Toronto is the lowest that it has been in 16 years, and the average rent for a one-bedroom is now the highest in Canada, at \$2,100 a month.

Minister, or the parliamentary assistant to the minister, building new homes will not help Kwame's situation. Melissa Jean-Baptiste, a lawyer and caseworker at the Kensington-Bellwoods Community Legal Services clinic, has been working with Kwame, and she outlined some very reasonable solutions in a letter that was personally delivered to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. They include:

Illegal lockouts and evictions should be given priority standing on dockets before the Landlord and Tenant Board.

Tenants should be ordered back in possession on an interim basis as soon as it is determined that no legal eviction has taken place.

Orders for repossession should not be automatically stayed pending appeal.

The landlords found at fault for attempting renovations should be issued fines to deter this behaviour, because when we allow illegal renovations to happen without any penalty, it means that landlords are going to keep doing it, and that's what we're experiencing right now.

1810

I also want to provide some additional comment to the theory that supply alone is going to deal with our housing affordability crisis. We have tried this experiment before. We had no rent controls on new builds in Toronto and Ontario for 27 years. We have had a huge condo construction boom. We've had over 40,000 rental units built in Toronto in the last four years, but only 1,000 of them are considered affordable, and that's the key here. That definition of affordable—we're going by the city of Toronto's definition of affordable, and they define affordable as what the average apartment rent is in Toronto today. That's a pretty unaffordable definition of affordable.

A better definition of affordable, which is what many people are advocating for, is that no one should be spending more than 30% of their income on rent. When we take that definition into account, when we consider how much someone can actually pay, the number of affordable housing apartments built in this city is probably far lower. It is not homes we need; it is affordable homes.

I urge this government to move forward and build truly affordable housing. That means investing in co-ops, like the one at 8 Sultan Street, just 300 metres from here. Residents have lived there for 30 years. It is a marvelous building. It is well maintained. There is an interior courtyard. There are many seniors living there. It sits right next to multi-million dollar, \$1.5-million homes and it's this little oasis right there. It exists and it is possible.

It means inclusionary zoning so new builds have permanently affordable two- to three-bedroom apartments so families can afford to stay and live in Toronto and raise their kids in Toronto. There are a lot of people out there who are giving up on Toronto and moving out; they can't afford to live here anymore, and that's not fair.

It means real rent control, with a serious hard look at vacancy decontrol and better protections for renters so the financial incentive to kick people like Kwame out is eliminated. It means the government investing in building truly affordable two- and three-bedroom homes on land that we own, like parking lots.

We don't need to go the way of Vancouver or New York or Hong Kong. Toronto is a region that should be a place where the people who study and teach and fight fires and clean and cook for us can also afford to live a good life as well.

I look forward to your response.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, may reply for up to five minutes.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Thank you to the member.

I'd like to begin by saying that our government understands that good-quality housing that is affordable is critical to the people of Ontario and for building a strong economy. We know that far too many people in Ontario are having a hard time finding suitable, affordable rental accommodations. This is a problem we inherited and a problem we intend to fix. We signalled that intention in our fall economic statement.

With regard to evictions, the Residential Tenancies Act sets out the rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenant for most residential rental properties in Ontario. Under the Residential Tenancies Act, every tenant facing eviction has the right to a hearing at the Landlord and Tenant Board. Illegally evicting someone is an offence under the RTA, and the ministry enforces the law when such matters are reported to us.

To give further context, the majority of eviction applications are because rent has not been paid. There are other grounds for evictions, including damage, illegal activity, interference with the landlord or other tenants' reasonable enjoyment, and the persistent late payment of rent. The act also allows a landlord to evict tenants if the landlord needs to use the unit themselves or if an immediate family member or caregiver needs it. In these cases, the landlord must compensate the tenant an amount equal to one month's rent or offer the tenant another rental unit that is acceptable to the tenant.

Landlords can also evict tenants if a unit needs to be vacated so repairs or renovations that require a building

permit can take place, or if the rental property is being demolished. Tenants who have been asked to vacate a unit so renovations can be done have the right of first refusal to return to their unit. A landlord who denies someone that right of first refusal commits an offence under provincial law and can be fined up to \$25,000 per count, if convicted. That rises to \$100,000 if the landlord is a corporation.

The Residential Tenancies Act also provides compensation to the affected tenant by the Landlord and Tenant Board ruling. The Landlord and Tenant Board is an adjudicative tribunal. It provides information to tenants and landlords about their rights and responsibilities and it resolves disputes under the Residential Tenancies Act independently of government.

To preserve this independence, it is inappropriate for me, the minister or government officials to interfere in or comment on the board's process. However, as Minister Clark stated in the House last week, the government is aware of issues that both landlords and tenants are facing with the Landlord and Tenant Board. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that the Attorney General is working to deal with the shortage of adjudicators so that the Landlord and Tenant Board operates with expediency.

Right now, there are many more renters than there are affordable places to rent, and as we all know, rental unit construction has not kept up with the pace of demand. Decisions made by the previous government made that situation worse. The previous government made it much too hard to be a landlord. Developers had started building new rental units, but then they stopped. Instead, vacancy rates are at the lowest we've seen in 17 years and Ontario has some of the highest rents in the country. This is unacceptable to our government. Rent controls discourage landlords from creating more rental housing and a lack of supply drives up the cost of renting.

That is why this government is taking action to help increase the supply of rental housing in Ontario. Last week, we introduced legislation that will exempt new rental units that are occupied for the first time after November 15, 2018, from rent control. This will encourage landlords to create more rental housing. That's what Ontario tenants need. And we are standing by our commitment to protect existing tenants, because anyone who is already renting or starting to rent an older apartment, whether it's next week, next month or next year, will still be protected by rent control.

Mr. Speaker, our government has a plan to help both landlords and tenants. Exempting new rental units from rent control will help stimulate new rental construction. It will give renters more choice and will reduce costs.

GENDER IDENTITY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member for London North Centre has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Education. The member from London North Centre has up to five minutes for his comments, and then the Minister of Education may have up to five minutes to respond.

I now turn it over to the member from London North Centre.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: On Monday, I was dissatisfied with the answer I received to my question.

Here in this Legislature, we have to be very careful when we are discussing issues around human rights. Human rights can never, ever be ignored. From the very beginning of this government, we heard from the throne speech the word “lifestyle” used, and that was an incredibly upsetting and disturbing moment.

In my question, I had asked about resolution 4, which went forward at the recent Progressive Conservative convention. That resolution sent shock waves through the trans community. Not only was the subject matter questionable, but the actual number of the resolution itself, that it was given priority sequence, resolution number 4—obviously that was something that was important to the people at that convention. But further, when we consider how conventions are organized—that there is a steering committee that decides on order of precedence—that was clearly an important item for that convention. That’s a grave concern, Speaker.

1820

In the response, the minister tried to say that it was reflective of a convention and not party policy, but we cannot separate the fact that policy that moves forward at these conventions informs government policy. We are still representing our party here within this Legislature. The Premier, in recent days, has made some noises on the issue, but it has been nowhere near enough. Words need to be unequivocal; denunciation needs to be unequivocal. It also need to be backed up by concrete actions.

The Premier pledged to stop resolution 4 from the convention. I’m not quite certain how that is actually going to work. The resolution itself sought to remove gender identity from the Ontario health curriculum, but it’s like closing the barn door after the horses have run free. The fact of the matter is that trans people and LGBTQ2S have already been scrubbed from the curriculum. They have been erased from the curriculum.

When teachers look at a curricular document, it’s in terms of hitting on those overall expectations as well as those specific expectations. The fact of the matter is—scan the document, Speaker—LGBTQ does not show up in a specific expectation. It does not show up in an overall expectation. That being said, the teacher might not teach that.

Further, we had the snitch line that was set up. Ostensibly, if a teacher teaches the entire 1998 curriculum and has additional time on their hands, if they were going to discuss issues or topics from the 2015 curriculum, they can be tattled upon.

The government’s repeal of that curricular document was an absolute disgrace. Trans students already feel marginalized in schools: 87% of trans students say they’ve felt unsafe at school and 77% have considered suicide. So let’s take them out of the curriculum. They are already marginalized enough.

Trans rights are human rights. Someone’s identity should never be up for debate or consultation. Resolution 4 and the ideas behind it that question the very existence of trans people are utterly disgraceful and something that we should be rising above. We should be looking out and protecting people and making people’s lives better. This resolution and the fact that LGBTQ voices and families and identities have been scrubbed from the curriculum are an absolute disgrace and an affront to human rights. Trans students deserve a government that will protect their rights, not trample upon them and ignore them.

We see a government that is bowing to extremist, fringe politics. I’m proud to stand on this side where we have done so much to elevate human rights—the former MPP for Parkdale–High Park and Toby’s Law, which enshrined gender identity as well as gender expression in the Ontario Human Rights Code, as well as the Trans Day of Remembrance. I also asked the question of the Premier, if he would attend. It was actually a gift, because if the Premier had chosen to attend that flag raising, it would have sent a signal to the community. It would have sent a powerful message: that LGBTQ people do belong in Ontario classrooms and in Ontario. But unfortunately, he never showed up.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now the Minister of Education may have up to five minutes for reply.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I’m very pleased to stand before you today. Just to remind everybody watching, we want to hear from everyone when it comes to how to get curriculum right in the classroom. I would like to remind everyone that our consultation is going on until December 15. There are three streams that they can participate in: a digital survey, written submissions and telephone town halls. We actually expanded our telephone town halls to include 10 more days because of the popularity of them. I really am appreciative of the data that’s coming in. That is the best forum to exercise your voice in terms of what matters. Again, I invite everyone listening and watching to go to fortheparents.ca, have your voice heard and talk about what matters to you. That is where you can really make a difference.

Coming back to the question at hand, I have to repeat myself, Speaker: The resolution in question is not binding on government policy, and our Premier has been extremely clear on this topic. He is on record as saying that he will explore every option as leader of the Ontario PC Party to prevent this particular resolution from moving forward.

Speaker, I’ll tell you what I’m going to do and rise above: I’m going to rise above party politics. I am not engaging in and will not engage in perpetuating politics of fear.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Kingston and the Islands has in fact given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer given to a question by the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and

Parks. The member from Kingston and the Islands has up to five minutes to discuss his side, and, in this particular case, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks may reply for up to five minutes.

I'll turn it over to the member from Kingston and the Islands.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Climate change is the single biggest threat faced by our province and our country, and it will in particular be felt by my millennial generation and those who come after. The seriousness of this topic cannot be overstated enough. It is a crisis on a global scale, and the biggest threat to this planet in thousands of years. The consequences of failing to take immediate action on this are catastrophic. Anything other than immediate, dramatic action is unacceptable. It is as simple as that, Mr. Speaker. Adopting a climate plan that has led to increasing emissions in Australia is the opposite of what we should be doing here in Ontario.

Last night, I was honoured to attend a gala for Pollution Probe, an environmental organization. As I was leaving, a young man approached me, and he wanted to talk about climate change. He had come to Canada as a child, and he spoke of how proud he was to be Canadian, how much it meant to him to be able to build a life for himself and his family, to build a life here in Canada. He talked about how scared he was that we are facing this global crisis and that nothing is being done. He couldn't hold back the emotion he was feeling. He was crying in front of me at a gala. He couldn't believe the ignorance and refusal on the part of those in power to take meaningful action, and he was terrified that this country that he had gotten to come to, this country he was so proud to be a part of, was not going to be the same for his children as it was for him.

Mr. Speaker, this is exactly what youth across Canada and the world are feeling. The UN Secretary-General said we have less than two years to solve this problem. That means it's on this government in this House to address this in a meaningful way, with complete action on this. For too long, "leaders have refused to listen," said the Secretary-General. "The time has come for our leaders to show they care about the people whose fate they hold in their hands."

But I fear that this government is filled with the very sort of politician that the UN Secretary-General is warning us against, that ideology is going to win out over intelligent policy, and that we will not have a plan that does enough to combat climate change in Ontario. Sadly, I know it's going to be us in the opposition who have to take up this flag, who have to fight for this issue. It will be us who unite Ontarians in community and caring, for we believe that what happens to our neighbours, to farmers, to First Nations, to retirees, to new immigrants, and to our planet matters. It matters to us, and it should matter to everyone over there.

If we continue to pass climate threshold after threshold, if farmers cannot grow food because of drought, if our neighbours lose their homes to fires and floods, and if the next generation of children do not get to play outside because of pollution, we must care, and we must do more.

1830

This government ignores the need for decisive leadership in the battle against climate change at their own peril. This threat is existential. It transcends our borders, and our responses should transcend political boundaries as well. We must 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.

Climate change will be the defining issue of elections to come. It has affected and will continue to affect the people of Ontario in ever-increasing ways. And it will do so much to bring this government down, for you have all chosen to land on the wrong side of history. This is the era of climate change and the battle for our planet. The numbers of youth and others who are joining this movement grow every single day, Mr. Speaker. Their voices have moved from sounding the alarm to saying that we will not accept this prescribed future. This future that was designed by the old and wealthy will finally be defined by us as we take dramatic action to save this country and this planet.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, the member for Barrie–Innisfil, will now have up to five minutes to respond. I now turn it over to the member.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I am pleased to rise in the House to address the concerns the member has raised.

The member had talked about being a millennial. Well, on the government side, in our caucus, we have over a dozen members in the millennial age. We're very proud of the diversity we have in our caucus, and we're very proud about all the priorities we have as a caucus, things that matter: making sure we have a balance between the environment and the economy; making sure we do tackle the deficit, because we do care about our future on this side of the House.

It is clear, I have seen from the member opposite, that he is very anxious to see our plan and what it will entail. I can assure you that we are also anxious to share it with him.

Speaker, our government has been clear. Our focus is on making Ontario a more affordable place to live. For too long, the people of Ontario were met with burdensome red tape and taxes affecting their daily lives. They needed change.

Our government was elected on the promise to get rid of the Liberal cap-and-trade carbon tax. The cap-and-trade carbon tax raised the cost of heating our homes. It raised the cost of putting fuel in our cars. It raised the cost of food. It raised the cost of almost everything, which is why we brought forward legislation that would provide relief to the people of Ontario. With the passing of Bill 4, families will save \$260 a year on average, Mr. Speaker. These are issues that matter. They no longer feel the pressure that the cost of fuel provides.

Members of the opposition called for a carbon tax at \$150 per tonne, Mr. Speaker. This increase would cause gas prices to be raised by 35 cents a litre. This is simply unaffordable. It would have increased natural gas bills to \$216 a month.

Our government is keeping our promise and delivering real savings to the people of Ontario, savings that will allow families to no longer have to worry about feeding their families or heating their homes.

When the finance minister revealed that Ontario was left with a \$15-billion deficit from the previous Liberal government, it painted a clear picture of the concerning state of our financial situation. Many millennials—including all members of our caucus of diverse backgrounds—very much care about this situation. It is the elephant in the room, Mr. Speaker.

Our government was afforded a mandate to conduct a thorough, line-by-line review of all government spending and programs.

The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario provides oversight of Ontario's environmental programs, and this will remain the case. However, we believe the goals and objectives of the Environmental Commissioner can be more effectively achieved under the purview of the Auditor General. This government is finally listening to the Auditor General, after years and years of a Liberal government that failed to listen.

The Auditor General is Ontario's leading authority in safeguarding taxpayers, ensuring programs are providing value for Ontario's taxpayers.

It's interesting that the member opposite is currently leaving this Legislative Assembly, showing no respect for this House—

Interjection: Shame.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: —and showing no respect for the response that he had requested. But I will continue, because the people of Ontario care—they care and they matter. This government is representing those people, and they deserve an answer.

So the member of the opposition who has left—I can assure that member, Ontario will remain the—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me, please. Again, it is unparliamentary to make reference to someone who may not be here. So I would ask that you just continue on, please. Thank you.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll make an additional correction. The natural gas saving is \$216—it should be “by \$216,” not “to \$216.”

I will conclude my remarks by saying that we the government care about the people of Ontario, and that is why we're providing tax relief and balancing the economy with a clean environment.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House now stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1836.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Tonia Grannum, Valerie Quioc Lim, William Short
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

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Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
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Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Berns-McGown, Rima (NDP)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Calandra, Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
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Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Des Rosiers, Nathalie (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	
Downey, Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	
Dunlop, Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
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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
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
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	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Parm (PC)	Milton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda (PC)	Cambridge	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Orléans	
Lecce, Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—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
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée 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
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)	Ajax	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
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, Sheref (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, Gurratan (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	Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
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	
Thanigasalam, 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 Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
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West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakubski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

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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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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Amy Fee, Vincent Ke
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Parm Gill, Lindsey Park
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Sara Singh, Monique Taylor
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Robert Bailey, Rima Berns-McGown
Michael Coteau, Mike Harris
Faisal Hassan, Jane McKenna
Christina Maria Mitas, Sam Oosterhoff
Amanda Simard, Gurratan Singh
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Présidente: Catherine Fife
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Peggy Sattler
Catherine Fife, Goldie Ghamari
Jim McDonnell, Norman Miller
Suze Morrison, Michael Parsa
Peggy Sattler, Kinga Surma
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Randy Hillier
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kaleed Rasheed
Toby Barrett, Will Bouma
Mike Harris, Randy Hillier
Mitzie Hunter, Laura Mae Lindo
Paul Miller, Billy Pang
Kaleed Rasheed, Amarjot Sandhu
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Présidente: Nina Tangri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Deepak Anand
Deepak Anand, Doly Begum
Jeff Burch, Amy Fee
Michael Gravelle, Joel Harden
Belinda Karahalios, Robin Martin
Sheref Sabawy, Nina Tangri
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Select Committee on Financial Transparency / Comité spécial
de la transparence financière**

Chair / Président: Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Doug Downey
Roman Baber, Doug Downey
Catherine Fife, Robin Martin
Lindsey Park, Ross Romano
Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria, Sandy Shaw
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim