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Lundi
24 septembre 2018

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Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Todd Decker

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 24 September 2018

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 24 septembre 2018

The House met at 1030.

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'd like to welcome members of the Grape Growers of Ontario: Matthias Oppenlaender, who is the chairman of the Grape Growers; Bill Schenck, vice-chairman of the Grape Growers; and Stephanie Gawur and Carol Mitchell, who are counsel with the Grape Growers.

I would also like to welcome the Ontario building trades representatives who are going to be here this evening. I look forward to attending their reception this evening.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I'm honoured to have two members of my campaign team here from Oakville today. The first is my executive assistant, Christopher Warren, and the second individual is a former deputy commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who served our country, Mr. Curt Allen.

M^{me} France Gélinas: We have members from the Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance here at Queen's Park. There are 21 of them, so be patient with me:

- Association of Local Public Health Agencies;
- Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario;
- Ontario Public Health Association;
- Ophea;
- Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario;
- Canadian Cancer Society;
- Canadian Diabetes Association;
- Canadian Mental Health Association;
- Cardiac Health Foundation of Canada;
- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health;
- Champlain CVD Prevention Network;
- Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance of Canada;
- Dietitians of Canada;
- Health Nexus;
- Kidney Foundation of Canada;
- Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario;
- Chronic Disease Prevention Managers in Public Health;
- Ontario Kinesiology Association;
- Ontario Society for Health and Fitness;
- Osteoporosis Canada; and
- Parks and Recreation Ontario.

Everybody is welcome to come see them in room 228 at noon. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I have the privilege of welcoming a constituent to the Legislature this afternoon: George Appleton, who is here from my riding of Niagara West. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I would like to welcome Simon Hauber's family here from St. Catharines.

Simon recently started here as a page. His mother, Michelene, is here as well, who was a page here in the House. His brothers Malcolm and Thomas have joined us today to wish Simon well in his new endeavours. Welcome.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm pleased to welcome representatives from Merit, Ontario: Bernie Melloul, Gian Fortuna, Ian Kowalchuk, Phil Besseling, Walter Pamic, Tim Henhoeffler, Ron Worrall, Domenic Mattina, Gordon Sproule, Cam Besseling, Terrance Oakey and Michael Gallardo.

They're here to advocate for more democratic workplaces, and I invite all members to join them for a reception tonight at 5 p.m. in rooms 228 and 230. Welcome.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to welcome the Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance. They're here today at Queen's Park. They represent 75,000 members and volunteers. They're hosting an annual lobby day, and I look forward to meeting with their members this afternoon. They're doing something at lunchtime, so I hope everybody can join us.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to introduce Joe Varner, the husband of MPP MacLeod, and daughter Toria MacLeod-Varner. She is also a page here. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I just want to acknowledge Walter Pamic, who is a small business owner from Ottawa, a former federal candidate and an early supporter of my campaign. Welcome, Walter.

Mr. Aris Babikian: I would like to welcome a constituent of mine, Mrs. Jiao Jiang. She is the mother of page Eric Li. Welcome to the House.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: I'm very, very pleased today to welcome a pair of proud grandparents: Don and Virginia Mackie, grandparents of our new page Joshua.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I would like to welcome the members of the Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance in the gallery today. They represent 21 health organizations focused on chronic disease prevention and management. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I'd like to welcome the family of Vedikaa Singh, our page from Newmarket-Aurora: Ruchika Singh, Pankaj Singh and Nishka Singh. Welcome to Queen's Park.

TORNADOES IN OTTAWA

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I rise on a point of order today to acknowledge an incident that happened in my city of Ottawa on Friday. A tornado touched down in Ottawa—two tornadoes, in fact—in my riding as well as in the riding of the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

I would like to publicly thank those from Hydro Ottawa and Hydro One who worked tirelessly to get most of our city back on the power grid, as well as all of our first responders, who made sure that we were safe.

Given the tragic circumstances, we are very fortunate that there was not a fatality as a result of this, after having seen the severity on the ground.

I'd also like to say thank you to the volunteers throughout Ottawa who showed up with food and comfort for those who were affected. In just Nepean alone we've had over 10,000 people who were without power who ended up with power last night.

Lastly, to the people of Trend-Arlington, Craig Henry and, of course, my colleague's community of Dunrobin, I would like to let them know on behalf of all the people in this Legislature that we support them, we're praying for them and we want to make sure that they get back on track.

Finally, I'd like to say thank you to my government colleagues who have reached out from the Ministries of Energy, Health, Education and Municipal Affairs to say that they would act swiftly for our people and our city. Thank you very much.

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

1040

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would now ask the pages to assemble.

It is my privilege and honour as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ask all members to join me in welcoming this group of legislative pages, serving in the first session of the 42nd Parliament: Aaliyah Kinney from Hamilton Mountain; Alexander Tracey from the riding of Beaches–East York; Alisha Aslam from Scarborough North; Derek Lin from the riding of Don Valley North; Deven Sinanan, Markham–Stouffville; Eric Li from Scarborough–Agincourt; Erika Celestin, Brampton East; Isha Sarfraz, Toronto Centre; Jocelyn Kuntsi from Algoma–Manitoulin; Joshua Chicoine from Hastings–Lennox and Addington; Justine Babin from Pickering–Uxbridge; Kathleen Fleming from Parry Sound–Muskoka; Martin Leduc, Orléans; Meagan Sequeira, Mississauga–Lakeshore; Molly Jin from Milton; Patrick Bellerose from Kiiwetinoong; Simon Dubé from Nipissing; Simon Hauber from St. Catharines; Vedikaa Singh, Newmarket–Aurora; Victoria Anne Macleod-Varner, Ottawa West–Nepean; Victoria Zhangliu, Waterloo; and William Oesch from the great riding of Wellington–Halton Hills.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question is to the Premier. Before I give it, though, I do want to acknowledge as well, on behalf of Ontario's New Democrats, the tragedy that befell Ottawa on the weekend and say to the members affected that our hearts are with you. I know it's been a difficult road for your constituents in the last couple of days.

Did the Premier believe that the previous Liberal government was accurately reporting the province's deficit figure when the election campaign began this spring?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell the opposition what I believe. What I believe is what the Auditor General was saying: that they were cooking the books. That's what I believe. I also believe that the Leader of the Opposition and the NDP party was supporting the Liberals every step of the way—

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

Hon. Doug Ford: Withdraw.

What I do believe is we have the worst political scandal in Ontario's history at hand right now. We will be going through line item by line item. We'll be putting a team together to make sure that people are held accountable for the taxpayers of Ontario. That's what I believe.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: On Friday, the Minister of Finance put on a show that Ontarians see every time a new government rolls in: pretending to be shocked by the deficit numbers, which weren't a shock to anyone who has read a newspaper over the last year. The Premier promised people change, but this pantomime act is right out of the McGuinty-Wynne playbook. Does the Premier really expect anyone to believe it?

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, through you, Mr. Speaker: As I mentioned earlier, we have the worst political scandal in Ontario's history. We have a \$15-billion scandal on our hands, and we're going to get down to the bottom of it. As the NDP stood side by side, shoulder by shoulder with the Liberals, boosting them up—as you can hear, protecting them—that is unacceptable to the people of Ontario.

The people of Ontario want answers. We had an event, Ford Fest, on the weekend, and what I heard over and over again was, "Where did my money go? Who's being held accountable?" I assure the people of Ontario that there are going to be answers. We will get down to the bottom of it, and there will be people held accountable.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, I wish the Premier would actually look at the numbers, because he would discover

that the Tories propped up the Liberals about 50% of the time.

The Premier spent the last spring campaign promising everything to everyone. He said that he'd balance the budget within three years, slash taxes for his wealthy friends and do it all without cutting the services that families rely on. New Democrats have argued for months that the promise to balance the books by 2021 was reckless, irresponsible and could not be achieved without deep, deep cuts to the services that families rely upon.

Is the Premier still promising to balance the books by 2021, or is he now admitting that his promise was irresponsible and that he never had a plan to keep it?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to know why the Leader of the Opposition is defending the Wynne Liberals. That's what I'd like to know.

Talk about accounting practices: The NDP had the same accounting practices during the election as we saw with the Liberals for the last 15 years. They couldn't add up their own budget. They were \$5 billion off. The only difference is that the Liberals were about \$9 billion off on their projections.

But I can assure the people of Ontario: We're going to keep with our mandate of lowering taxes for the middle-income families of this province, lowering gas prices—we're already halfway there—with a reduction of five cents per litre. We're going to lower the hydro rates to the tune of 12%, and we're going to get jobs created in this great province.

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Let's be specific: During the last campaign, the Premier echoed our commitment to end hallway medicine in our hospitals, yet he also committed to \$6 billion in across-the-board cuts, which would result in hospital closures in Ontario and layoffs for front-line staff.

I was at the Thunder Bay regional hospital on Friday, a hospital like many others across Ontario that has been operating at surge capacity for months and months. Is the Premier prepared to back away from his \$6 billion in cuts to ensure that hospitals like this have the resources that they need to combat hallway medicine?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I can tell the Leader of the Opposition that we have the best Minister of Health I've ever seen—ever. I have all the confidence in the Minister of Health to end hallway medicine, hallway health care, and to stop the lineups that are four or five hours in the hallway of every hospital in this province.

We will reach out to the doctors and the nurses, who we think the world of, the front-line workers, to get their opinion. Once we get the input from the front-line health care workers, the nurses and the doctors, we will move forward with a joint plan, because nothing is worse than a bunch of politicians telling professional health care workers how to operate the hospitals, what they do every single

day. We will straighten out the health care mess that was created—

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

1050

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, during the campaign, the Premier promised that he could and would make \$6-billion worth of cuts and that no hospital or family would be affected by his cuts. But on Friday, his finance minister said, "The hole is deep and it will require everyone to make sacrifices without exception." Which is it?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Leader of the Opposition: We're focused on the \$15-billion scandal at hand here, when the Leader of the Opposition said, "What's wrong with that? There's nothing wrong with that. You knew about it."

The only person that knew about it was the Leader of the Opposition and the NDP and the Liberals, because they were shoulder to shoulder, standing together, while they were creating the biggest political scandal in Ontario's history.

We need answers. The people of Ontario need answers. And I can tell you, the Leader of the Opposition better come up with better answers than, "We all knew about it." That is disgusting.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I don't know where the Premier was hiding, but it was pretty obvious that there was going to be a problem, with the auditor's response to the Liberal books, and we all knew it. Maybe the Premier didn't; he would be one of the only people in Ontario that didn't.

But families in Ontario told us—

Interjections.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Families in Ontario told us what they want is action on crumbling schools, crowded hospitals and disappearing jobs. Instead, they get a Premier playing games with the deficit, focused on avenging old grudges and backroom deals for his friends and scrambling to explain why he's not going to keep the empty promises that he made on the campaign trail. Everyone in Ontario knew the Liberals were playing games with the deficit. It was obvious.

Will the Premier admit that his promise to instantly eliminate the deficit while offering tax handouts to his wealthy friends was irresponsible and reckless and, if not, will he tell families exactly what it is that he plans to cut?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I want to know: Where was the Leader of the Opposition? We never heard anything from the Leader of the Opposition. But the Leader of the Opposition knew about it, that there was no big surprise.

So as the Leader of the Opposition and the NDP were voting with the Liberals 97% of the time, condoning the backroom deals, condoning the wasteful spending, they were standing shoulder to shoulder with them in the biggest political scam I've ever seen in my life, wasting billions and billions of taxpayers' money that our generation

and the next generation will be paying off. Our children will be paying it off, our grandchildren will be paying it off, all because the NDP stood by and condoned the actions of the Liberals.

DISASTER RELIEF

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. On Friday, as we've all acknowledged in the House this morning, the Ottawa region was struck by two tornadoes of devastating force. Miraculously, no fatalities occurred, as the minister for children and youth has mentioned, but several were injured, homes were destroyed and hundreds of thousands lost power.

On behalf of myself, the members of my caucus and the member for Ottawa Centre, I want to say that there was a great deal of devastation, and we want to acknowledge that and acknowledge the hard work and leadership of all of the first responders and folks in Ottawa that pulled together in the face of this tragedy.

The Premier stated that the provincial government "will provide whatever resources are required to support Ottawa as they work to recover." Can the minister provide us with any more details on what resources will be deployed to aid the ongoing relief efforts?

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. I also want to acknowledge the work that has been done by our first responders, hydro workers and city of Ottawa officials. I also want to commend Premier Ford, members of our cabinet, Minister MacLeod and Minister Fullerton, the government members, the opposition members in Ottawa, the MPs and the city councillors for all of the work that they have done.

As we announced on Saturday, our government has activated the disaster recovery assistance for Ontario program. We continue to work with the city of Ottawa officials. We continue to have people from my ministry on the ground being able to answer those questions for citizens.

Again, I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Opposition. This is something that we all need to rally around. There was tremendous devastation in those communities. Those citizens of Ottawa are going to need not just the financial supports, but also the health care supports and the mental health supports. There are a lot of things that our government is willing to put up to help the city of Ottawa. I'd be pleased to answer more in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, on the weekend, the government did announce that it is activating the disaster recovery assistance program in the Ottawa region to cover emergency expenses for residents over and above what private insurers can provide. The Minister of Municipal Affairs has said that the exact areas qualifying for assistance are in the process of being determined.

Can the minister assure the city of Ottawa and all Ottawa region residents who have experienced property damage or loss that they will be eligible for disaster recovery assistance? We know that this program has not been as

it should in the past, in other situations that have occurred around our province. We just want to get an assurance that, in fact, people who need the support are absolutely going to get it.

Hon. Steve Clark: Thanks again to the Leader of the Opposition for the question. Typically, with the DRAO program, the two typical complaints that we received are that past governments haven't activated the program early enough and that claims took too long to process. That's why our government acted quickly and enacted the program within 24 hours of the disaster taking place, and we've committed. We have people on the ground right now in the city of Ottawa. We continue to pledge that we're going to put in as many resources as we can to process those claims quickly. We want to make sure that we're responsive to the needs of the citizens in Ottawa.

I think most people know that our assistance program is meant to supplement insurance, but that doesn't mean to say that people have to wait. That's why we acted decisively and acted in the best interests of the people of Ottawa.

Again, I want to reiterate, my thanks to all members of this House and the community of Ottawa.

The one thing that I know Premier Ford and I saw when we toured the areas of devastation was the tremendous sense of community, the fact that neighbours were working together to help each other to get through this. Our government is going to stand with them.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Mr. Speaker, as has already been noted, on Friday evening, tornadoes rampaged through the city of Ottawa, leaving a trail of devastation in their wake. Thanks to the brave work of our first responders, we are blessed that no lives have been lost as a result of this, but the destruction and anguish left behind is all too real.

In the communities of Dunrobin, Trend-Arlington and Craig Henry, many people have found themselves without a home. Thousands across Ottawa remain without power.

Mr. Speaker, could the minister please update the House on the quick actions that our government has taken to provide support and relief to the people of Ottawa in this time of need?

Hon. Steve Clark: Through you, Speaker: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. I appreciated seeing him yesterday in Barrhaven.

I want to again acknowledge the tremendous work that's being done on the ground by our first responders and by hydro officials. The Premier and I and MPPs on the ground had an opportunity yesterday to meet with the mayor, with the chief and with other officials. There have been incredible lines of communication that have been opened between the groups. Again, I want to credit all of those people, from all sides of the House, and in the community, for the work that they have done.

1100

As has been mentioned, the Premier toured the Dunrobin site with Minister Fullerton. I had the opportunity to tour Trend-Arlington and Craig Henry with Minister MacLeod.

Again, I want to say that we acted quickly with the Disaster Recovery Assistance for Ontarians program. In the supplemental, I'll give more details on that program.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for that update and for his tireless work on behalf of the people of Ottawa, to ensure that they received the support they needed.

Yesterday, the Premier took the time to tour some of the damaged areas and visit with residents impacted by this disaster. As he said at the time, it was truly inspiring to see the strength and resilience of our people in this time of crisis. I am proud of both my hometown and my colleagues in this chamber and at city hall, who have stepped up and shown such tremendous leadership.

I know that many families right now are concerned about the financial impacts of this disaster. Mr. Speaker, could the minister please update us on the rollout of the Ontario government recovery assistance program?

Hon. Steve Clark: Thank you to the member.

My ministry staff are working with Ottawa officials to identify the specific areas where the disaster recovery program will be activated. It's my expectation that those maps will be available today.

The program helps individuals and small businesses recover by providing financial assistance for essential costs not covered by insurance. Examples include basic furnishings, appliances and emergency costs.

As I said earlier, the two biggest complaints were that, in the past, the program wasn't activated early enough and it used to take a long time to deal with these applications. I've committed that my ministry will maintain a strict customer service standard to get those applications turned around as fast as possible.

More information can be found on my department's website at ontario.ca/disasterassistance. For those who would like to help, I encourage you to call the Red Cross and the Salvation Army, who are accepting donations.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Ms. Jill Andrew: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier.

Since his election, many Ontarians have had serious doubts about the Premier's commitment to combatting racism and prejudice. Then, over the weekend, Faith Goldy, a far-right candidate for Toronto mayor with ties to neo-Nazi groups, posted a picture on social media of the Premier posing for a picture with her and her supporters, to which she added, "Faith Nation is Ford Nation."

Will the Premier unequivocally denounce Faith Goldy and her hateful campaign and apologize to Ontarians for appearing in a photo that is now being used as a de facto endorsement?

Hon. Doug Ford: Boy, Mr. Speaker, they've sunk to a new low. If they were at Ford Fest, it was the most diverse group anywhere in Canada—anywhere—of every race, of every creed, of every colour, of every religion and of every political stripe. There's no group in the entire country that represents Toronto and Ontario more than Ford nation does.

I can't help when thousands of people are coming at you and they're taking pictures right, left and centre.

You know something? They've hit a new low. They've hit a new low, because I'll tell you what the people of Ford Fest talked about: The people of Ford Fest talked about the \$15-billion scandal that wasted the taxpayers' money, and how the NDP stood side by side with the Liberals as the scandal was unrolling year after year. That's what the people of Ford Fest were talking about. They weren't talking about anything else. They're disgusted by this financial scandal they face right now in the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Jill Andrew: The Ford government is standing up and applauding for racism and prejudice. Shame on you.

Groups like the Canadian Anti-Hate Network registered deep concern about Goldy at the outset of the Toronto campaign, saying that they "expect her to try to use her mayoral run as a platform to spread hate." They asked media and other candidates not to legitimize her campaign, and she's clearly used this photo with the Premier to claim exactly that sort of legitimacy.

Sadly, we live in a time where hate groups pushing bigotry and seeking to divide people are on the rise. What does the Premier say to Ontarians who may be wondering if the Premier's photo and the viral video of our Premier smiling and taking photo shots like a glamour model—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Question.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Will the Premier denounce that photo, yes or no?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: What I found amazing is the diverse group of people who showed up to Ford Fest, the 8,000 people. And there were thousands of people who couldn't come in through the door.

Again, I want to remind the NDP and the Liberals what people were talking about.

Interjection.

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

Hon. Doug Ford: They were talking about the \$15-billion scandal. They were talking about the wasted tax dollars we've seen over 15 years. They want people held accountable. They want lower taxes, lower hydro bills and lower gas prices. They need good—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Toronto—St. Paul's must come to order.

Hon. Doug Ford: —when I have thousands of people coming at me.

Do you know why they've never experienced it? Because they couldn't get a crowd like that. Any of them couldn't get a crowd like that. That is what Ontario's representative is, the group of people who showed up—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Toronto–St. Paul’s must come to order. The House will come to order.

Next question.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING AND ACCOUNTING PRACTICES

Ms. Donna Skelly: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Last week, we learned the ugly truth about the state the Liberals left this province in, thanks to the work of the Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry. Along with my colleagues, I was absolutely shocked and disappointed to learn the extent of the Liberals’ waste and mismanagement over their 15 disastrous years in government.

It is crucial that we end the Liberal culture of scandal after scandal and allow the public to once again have faith in its government. Can the minister explain what further work is under way to restore accountability and trust in this province’s finances?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you to the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook for the question.

The commission’s report reveals that the Liberals’ culture of waste and mismanagement was embedded at the highest levels. The Liberals told us they balanced the budget in 2017-18 when they really ran a \$3.7-billion deficit. Then, in the election year, they made empty promises for programs they could not afford.

Instead of being honest about the cost of their out-of-control spending, the Liberals made up their own accounting rules to keep the true cost from the public. The Liberals secretly ran a \$15-billion deficit, billions higher than anyone could total, by using what the Auditor General called “bogus” numbers.

The commission’s report serves as an important first step in restoring accountability and trust in Ontario’s finances. Our government is committed to respecting taxpayers and putting Ontario’s fiscal house back in order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Minister, it is an absolute relief to hear that further action is going to be taken based on the findings of the Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry. The multi-billion-dollar hidden deficits, dishonest accounting tricks and empty promises of the previous Liberal government simply cannot go—

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: Withdraw.

The previous Liberal government simply betrayed the trust of the people of Ontario and must provide an explanation. Could the minister explain why it is so crucial to restore accountability and trust following this Liberal scandal?

1110

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thanks to the commission’s diligent work, we now have a true accounting of Ontario’s

fiscal position. This was a necessary first step in restoring confidence in the government’s books.

While there’s still much work to be done, we are already moving toward positive change. We are bringing greater transparency in preparing our financial documents, beginning with the 2017-18 public accounts. This has resulted in the Auditor General giving the public accounts a clean opinion for the first time in three years. Congratulations to Minister Bethlenfalvy.

It is now our duty to return to a balanced budget. We will do so on a timetable that is reasonable, modest and pragmatic. Together, we will return Ontario to balance and reclaim our position as the economic engine of Canada.

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, through you to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: Last week, the minister was scrambling to explain why Toronto should be reduced to 25 councillors serving 2.9 million citizens while his riding of Leeds–Grenville has a total of 96 councillors representing 70,000 citizens. He couldn’t explain the discrepancy, but he did say that other municipal councils were under review.

Can the minister tell us whether he will be reducing the number of councillors serving his riding of Leeds–Grenville from 96 to one, and what other municipalities are under review?

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to thank the member for the question. In that scrum, I did talk about the review of regional governance that we started informally at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference. That would be more formalized in the fall.

The member is right: There are 13 municipalities in Leeds–Grenville, and the average council size is seven elected officials. The officials in my riding are very efficient. In fact, I think they can give the council in Toronto a few lessons on how to run an efficient and effective council meeting.

I’d be more than happy to extend further details in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Burch: This minister has reduced Toronto’s local representation to one councillor for every 110,000 constituents while his riding has a councillor for every 729. Municipal leaders across the province saw what happened in the city of Toronto. The Premier ignored the elected representatives of that municipality, threw an election into chaos and made it clear he’d take a chainsaw to the Charter of Rights to get his way.

Mr. Speaker, the logic is flawed, the process is unfair and the numbers don’t add up. Will the minister commit today to dealing respectfully with elected municipal governments to ensure that they get the final say on the size and design of their municipal councils?

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, again through you to the member: Here’s a number that I want the member to hear, and that is zero. That’s the amount of full-time councillors that are in Leeds–Grenville. I want him to listen to another

number: zero. That is the amount of constituency staff that a part-time councillor in a rural municipality has. These part-time councillors do an exceptional job, as they do throughout rural Ontario. In fact, again—

Interjections.

Hon. Steve Clark:—you don't have, in a rural municipality, a 15-hour council meeting. You don't have the deadlock and dysfunction that we've seen at Toronto city council. That's exactly why we passed the Better Local Government Act.

The member can talk about part-time rural councillors all he wants. We've placed this bill on the order paper and it's passed. We look forward to working with that Toronto council on October 22.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Mr. Michael Coteau: I also, on behalf of our caucus, would like to recognize the devastation that took place in Ottawa and thank everyone involved in the cleanup, especially our first responders.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Premier, does the Anti-Racism Directorate still exist, and if so, can you tell this House exactly what is the next step you will be taking in order for it to reach its mandate?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I can reassure the House here and I can reassure the people of Ontario that we denounce all forms of hate, and we will not waver from denouncing all forms of hate.

What I'd like to ask the member from Don Valley East is, what was he doing when his team was wasting \$15 billion of the taxpayers' money? That's what I'd like to ask the member from Don Valley East, as they sat shoulder to shoulder along with the NDP and their whole gang over there, wasting billions and billions of dollars of taxpayers' money. I'd like to ask the member from Don Valley East how many backroom deals he was involved in. How many backroom deals was he involved in? We're going to find that out, how many deals you were involved in, along with—

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

Mr. Michael Coteau: I have a prediction: That's pretty much going to be the same answer this Premier gives, time after time, for the next year. We see through that, Premier.

My next question to the Premier: Within the Anti-Racism Directorate, there was a commitment of \$47 million to support Black youth in Toronto, Hamilton, Windsor and Ottawa. I would like to know, Mr. Premier, do you still intend to fund the \$47 million to support the Black Youth Action Plan? Recently on the website, all the information has been taken down, and people would like to know if you're still committed to supporting that.

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

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you for that question. As we've always said and will continue to say, there is no place for racism in the province of Ontario. We are working diligently—in fact, the PA from Brampton South, who

is part of my team, is working actively on that particular issue.

We are working towards doing a whole-of-government approach review, as well as ensuring that the message is clear throughout the province of Ontario: We do not support any kind of racism. We are working, through all our ministries, to ensure that opportunities are provided to all marginalized groups, including the Black communities. These are things that are very important to our government. We will continue working on them and ensure that we provide the outcomes necessary for our communities for Ontario.

PROVINCIAL DEBT

Ms. Lindsey Park: My question is for the Minister of Finance. It was sobering to hear the minister's speech on Friday. It was shocking to hear the true state of the province's finances after 15 years of the Liberals and their mismanagement. The minister promised a dose of reality. Well, Speaker, he certainly delivered: accounting tricks, empty promises and hidden deficits. The Liberals' skyrocketing debt and ballooning deficits should concern us all: families, seniors and particularly the next generation. I know it's deeply concerning to my constituents in Durham.

Could the minister explain to this Legislature the extent of the damage caused by 15 years of bad Liberal budgets?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you to the member from Durham. The Liberals have left us with the largest sub-national debt on the planet. Ontario is \$338 billion in debt. Speaker, even if we paid a thousand million dollars every year, it would take 338 years for Ontario to pay off the public debt left by the previous Liberal government. That's more than \$24,000 for every single person in Ontario.

The Auditor General said the Liberals made "their own accounting rules that serve to obfuscate" their financial directions. She said that serves to "conceal the true annual deficit."

1120

It is imperative that we put an end to this reckless culture of waste, mismanagement and scandals. We must work together to do everything we can to put Ontario back on secure financial footing.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Lindsey Park: Thank you to the minister for his response. It's clear that action must be taken to fix the mess the previous Liberal government has left behind. I'm proud that our government has taken the first steps in restoring accountability and trust in the province's finances.

While we know the task ahead will not be easy, we are also well aware of the risks of further inaction. Could the minister please explain the danger of continuing down the path the previous Liberal government has set us on?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Simply put, the Liberals not only mortgaged the future of our children but the future of our grandchildren and, believe it or not, their grandchildren as well. Again, the province is \$338 billion in debt. In

2017-18, we paid \$11.9 billion in interest payments alone to service that debt. That's more than the operating budget of the city of Toronto, more than a fifth of our health care budget, almost half of our education budget and nearly \$1 billion more than we spend on post-secondary education and training.

Balancing the budget is not only a fiscal imperative, it is a moral imperative. We owe it to our children, our grandchildren and their grandchildren to ensure that vital services and good-paying jobs will be there for them down the road.

NATURAL GAS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Last week, the Minister of Infrastructure was asked a very straightforward question in this House: Has the government cancelled the \$100-million grant program for rural natural gas expansion? The minister didn't give a straight answer.

That same afternoon, the Minister of Infrastructure cancelled \$8.9 million in grant funding for a natural gas expansion program in North Bay. So the answer was yes, they were cutting the grant program.

Can the minister tell us why the government cut this long-promised, \$100-million program to expand natural gas into rural Ontario?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you for the opportunity to highlight the fact that we're saving the taxpayers \$100 million while expanding natural gas service to more consumers across Ontario. This is simply swapping taxpayer funding for private sector investment.

It's quite something, actually, to hear the member attacking this when CBC reported last week that her own leader was "in agreement with Ford about natural gas expansion." Are they still on speaking terms? You know, we've seen this time and time again from the NDP over the years. They tell one group one thing and tell another group of people the complete opposite.

The negativity expressed by this member and other critics is putting the project in North Bay in jeopardy. Her comments are completely irresponsible.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Again to the Minister of Finance: Interesting about doing one thing and saying another, because it is unbelievable that this Conservative government would start the day by announcing a program to expand natural gas into rural Ontario and then spend the day cancelling \$100 million in funding to expand natural gas into rural Ontario.

This funding cut has unexpectedly and suddenly halted a natural gas expansion project in North Bay. Speaker, through you to the minister: Did the Minister of Finance actually approve this funding cut to the people in his own riding?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I thank the member sitting opposite for the question. We campaigned in the last

election to open Ontario up for business and to lower energy bills for the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, the opposite party supports only 12 individual projects across this province for a cost of \$100 million. What our plan is going to do is add 80 new communities. Eighty communities in Ontario will have access to natural gas. That's nearly 35,000 more households that are going to have access to natural gas.

What this does is, this saves those households up to \$2,500 per year. This is on top of scrapping the carbon tax here in Ontario that's going to save an additional \$80 per year for those families. Now, Mr. Speaker—

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

Hon. Monte McNaughton: That's quite different from what the opposition—

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

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Next question.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING AND ACCOUNTING PRACTICES

Mr. Mike Harris: My question is for the Minister of Finance. We ran on a commitment to the people of Ontario to restore accountability and trust in the province's finances. After 15 years of Liberal waste, mismanagement and scandal, the people of Ontario spoke loud and clear. They had enough. The people decided it was time for a government that would respect them and respect their hard-earned tax dollars—and for good reason.

Last Friday, the minister showed us all just how damaging the Liberal government's failed fiscal policies have been to our province. Could the minister please explain the shocking findings of the Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you to the member from Kitchener-Conestoga. I agree, Speaker. We must take immediate action to restore accountability and trust in government. That's why, this morning, Premier Ford announced our government's intention to form a select committee on financial transparency. Should the motion pass, Speaker, the committee will use the findings of the Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry to determine how the Liberals' disastrous policies ever saw the light of day.

The scandal laid out in the pages of the commission's report is unprecedented in recent Canadian history. The Liberal Party's accountability for the scandal did not end on election day. Their accountability started that day, the day Premier Ford took office. People deserve answers, and we will ensure that the people of Ontario get those answers.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you to the minister for his answer. It is disappointing to see the depths of the previous Liberal government's waste and mismanagement. It was

no wonder that the people of Ontario voted for a government that is committed to restoring accountability and trust that was absent for so long.

Our government has been making positive change for people right across the province since day one. However, the minister's speech last week illustrated the challenging road that lays before us. Could the minister please inform the House of our government's next steps in fixing the mess the Liberals left for us?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I would encourage everyone here to take a look at the Auditor General's pre-election report on Ontario's finances. In it, she said, the government "is making up its own accounting rules. She used words like "conceal," "bogus," "deceptive" and "unreliable" to describe Liberal documents tabled in this Legislature.

This is not a normal situation we're seeing, Speaker. I'll say this again. What we are witnessing is without precedent in Canadian politics. When taken together, the conclusions of the Auditor General and the commission of inquiry are a scathing indictment of how the Liberals broke the public's trust. This is not only about the numbers. It's about transparency and trust. The situation cannot be allowed to fester any longer. We will restore accountability and trust in government.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. People in the Basic Income Pilot had made long-term plans. They signed leases and enrolled in school based on a promise that the program would last three years. Their hopes for the future are now replaced with feelings of deep betrayal. Stress and anxiety have returned.

International researchers were watching and now they are calling out the government. They said, "Not only is the cancellation inconsistent with international best practices, but it violates your own Canadian policy for the ethical conduct of experiments involving humans."

1130

Why is this minister continuing to stick with their cruel and unethical decision to cancel the Basic Income Pilot?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I reject the premise of the question. This government is allowed to make decisions on financial matters and it's allowed to set policy direction.

This matter is before the courts, so it would be inappropriate for me to comment on specifics. But what I can tell you—what I said in July and what I said in August—is that there will be a compassionate runway, which is happening. No one has lost their cheques as of this month. That member opposite knows full well—

Interjection.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: If she would like to listen to the response, I'll provide her with the action plan of this government. We hit the pause on an unsustainable program and an unsustainable plan that the previous Liberal administration brought forward, which was disjointed and patchwork and which wasn't lifting the one in seven people in the province of Ontario out of poverty.

What we did is we hit the pause button across the board, allowing for a 1.5% increase in social assistance rates right across Ontario, and we've come forward with a 100-day plan. We're going to see more people out of—

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I think I'd just remind the government that on the campaign trail the Premier said that he would not cancel this program, and yet here he is, cancelling the program. Adding insult to injury, the people whose lives were ripped apart have never received any communication from the ministry: no letters, no emails, no phone calls. All they have to go on are media reports.

The disrespect shown by this government is absolutely reprehensible. They had just ripped away the hopes, dreams and income of the basic income participants, but they didn't have the common decency to speak to them. When will this government show just a little respect for Ontarians?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: We have been very clear: We are going to be a very compassionate government, and we are going to make sure that the one in seven people living in poverty in this province are set up for success. That means where someone is employable, we are going to put the supports in place to get them back into the workforce. Where they're not employable, we're going to make sure they have the supports in place to make their life a lot easier.

What wasn't happening under the previous Liberal administration, aided and abetted by the official opposition 97% of the time—it was a patchwork system that didn't lift people up. There was no social safety net.

So let me say this: The best social safety net is a compassionate society. The best social circumstances are when those people who can work are working. And the best social program in the province of Ontario is a job.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister for Children, Community and Social Services, come to order. The member for Hamilton Mountain, come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The minister will come to order. The minister will come to order. The member for Hamilton Mountain will come to order. The member for Windsor West will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to warn the member for Hamilton Mountain. Stop now. Let's stop now.

Start the clock. Next question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Last week, our government took action to deliver on our promise to repeal the Green Energy Act. After 15 years of bad decisions by the Liberals and being enabled by the NDP, we find this province's hydro system in the

mess it is in today. The Green Energy Act was a crucial part of those bad decisions. I know repealing it is an important step for our government. Can the minister please tell the members of this House, and all Ontarians, why it is so important to repeal the Green Energy Act?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for the question and, as well, the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, our Minister of Infrastructure, the champion of fighting against this horrible act, the Green Energy Act—more than seven years of his commitment has finally paid off.

Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker: The only thing green about the Green Energy Act is the green that lined the pockets of Liberal insiders. The Green Energy Act also represents the largest transfer of money from the poor and middle class to the rich in Ontario's history. It's a symbol of a failed energy policy of the past, with no regard to the people who actually pay hydro bills month in and month out. The act forced wasteful projects on unwilling communities and drove up the costs of hydro bills for families and businesses across this province.

Mr. Speaker, our government was elected to deliver on our promises for the people. We're committed to lowering hydro bills by 12%. Getting rid of the Green Energy Act is an important step towards that—a promise made, a promise kept.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Bill Walker: Back to the minister: I'd like to thank the Minister of Energy for his leadership on this important step in the right direction. Lowering hydro costs for the people of Ontario is one of our government's most important promises and priorities. I'm happy to know that our government is making good on that promise.

I know the minister is from the northern community of Kenora–Rainy River, and I want to join with all of his constituents there in wishing him a happy birthday today. I know that he understands the impact to rural communities like mine in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and all of the great ridings around this province.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please tell the members of this House and all Ontarians how repealing the Green Energy Act is going to help rural communities?

Hon. Greg Rickford: I want to thank the member for his question. It's true: I'm now old enough to reflect back on a province that had an energy advantage—manufacturers here in southern Ontario, forestry mills and mines firing on all cylinders because Ontario had a responsible energy plan. That changed 15 years ago, and the Green Energy Act had a lot to do with that.

Repealing this act is about giving power back to the municipalities and back to the people of Ontario. Our government is making sure that communities in rural Ontario aren't forced to become home to wasteful energy projects in the future.

I take this quote from Rex Murphy, one of the most respected political commentators in Canada, who stated, "Ontario's Green Energy Act was a horror for business, a gross invasion of municipal authority, and sent successive

Auditors General to whatever is the chartered accountants version of a hospice centre."

Less eloquently, Liberal elites got rich, Liberal party coffers were filled and—

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

HOSPITAL SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Speaker, we have a crisis in our hospital system. Hallway medicine and overcrowding have become the norm. In Sudbury, Health Sciences North faces an \$11-million deficit. So far, 60.5 nursing positions have been lost as they try to balance their budget. Now they have announced that they will be closing part of their breast cancer clinic, leading to more stress and longer wait times for women facing breast cancer.

Will the Minister of Health commit today to providing Health Sciences North with the funding necessary to end the layoffs and keep the full breast cancer clinic open in Sudbury?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. In fact, the situation at Health Sciences North is financially very difficult, with an \$11-million deficit. However, \$4.8 million has already been granted to them, to try to alleviate some of the situation. But I know that the LHIN is working very closely with Health Sciences North to try to alleviate the situation.

The nursing positions that are leaving are being dealt with through attrition and retirements, as the member will know. I know that more work has to be done; I have regular reports from the LHIN on that, and I know the ministry is doing whatever they can to try to alleviate the situation as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Earlier this month, the minister said that our hospitals will have to find "innovative" and "efficient" ways to operate. Like Health Sciences North, most Ontario hospitals are already struggling with chronic underfunding. Is the minister's definition of efficiency just a code for austerity, flat-line, zero-increase budgets, like the Liberals did for the past eight years?

Let me be clear, Speaker: The efficiencies have already been found and implemented in our hospitals. Now they have to decide which programs they are going to cancel. In Sudbury, it's the breast-screening clinic.

1140

Will the minister ensure that women with cancer receive timely care and fund Health Sciences North appropriately?

Hon. Christine Elliott: The health care situation for the people around the area of Health Sciences North is, of course, our top priority. We don't want anyone to lose services. But, while I recognize that most hospitals have done some work to find these efficiencies, there is still a lot more work to do.

We also know that many hospitals in Ontario right now are operating at over 100% capacity and that there are beds in places that there should not be beds. We are trying to alleviate that situation by, first of all, building more long-term-care beds, because up to 25% of all beds in any hospital across Ontario right now are being filled by people who should be elsewhere. They don't need to be in hospital, but they're there because they can't get to a long-term-care bed or they can't get to home care because they don't have the supports that they need.

We are also working on alleviating the issues related to people with chronic mental health problems, many of whom circle in and out of hospitals. We need to deal with that.

ONTARIO COACHING EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Mr. Will Bouma: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

I was delighted to see that the minister was able to attend the Ontario Coaching Excellence Awards this weekend in Toronto. I was also happy to see that Meagan Wilson, a rugby coach from my riding of Brantford—Brant, was honoured with the grassroots coach of the year award.

Ms. Wilson was honoured for her work on a free rugby camp on the Six Nations of the Grand River where youth aged five to 12 could participate. The Iroquois Roots Rugby program that she started in 2017 allows Indigenous youth to participate in rugby programs free of charge.

Meagan is also a full-time student, a varsity rugby player at McMaster University and a tireless volunteer who makes our communities better off.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Meagan for her contributions to my community and to ask the minister, can she tell us more about the Ontario Coaching Excellence Awards?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: You are rightfully proud of Meagan. She is doing an excellent job in Brantford. Thank you for your question.

I also want to congratulate Meagan Wilson. She was one of 10 coaches who were honoured for their hard work and dedication this weekend. If I may, I would like to congratulate Dawn Manerowski of Oshawa, Ian Atkinson of Waterloo, Giuseppe Politi of Sudbury, Glenn Paulley of Waterloo, Ryan Jones of Scarborough, Brenda Willis of Kingston, Ian Roopnarine from Brampton, Jay McNeilly from North York and Kathy Boyes from St. Catharines.

It was an honour this weekend to acknowledge the excellent work that great coaches are doing across our communities, kicking off the fourth annual National Coaches Week by participating in the Ontario Coaching Excellence Awards. We are celebrating the people behind the teams that we see on the ice, in the water, in our courts and on our fields.

I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize the superb—

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

Mr. Will Bouma: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. I am so pleased to see that our government for the people recognizes the importance of sport in our communities and how much coaches do to better our athletes and our communities as a whole. I think I can speak for members from all sides of the House when I say that coaches give so much to our local athletes and that we should be taking steps to make sure we recognize their great work.

Can the minister please provide the House with more details concerning the Ontario Coaching Excellence Awards and National Coaches Week?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I'm happy to. The Ontario Coaching Excellence Awards is a kickoff event for National Coaches Week here in Ontario and across Canada. The awards honour 10 coaches from all across Ontario who have made a difference coaching aspiring athletes. These coaches work with athletes ranging from grassroots level, like Meagan, to those performing on the Olympic stage. September 22 through to September 30 marks the fourth annual National Coaches Week and the 13th Coaches Week in Ontario, to celebrate the tremendous impact coaches have on athletes in our communities.

The Coaches Association of Ontario has also partnered with four communities from across the province to deliver community clinics which recruit, develop, educate and celebrate community volunteer coaches.

I call on all members to thank the coaches in their ridings for the wonderful work they are doing.

FOODLAND ONTARIO

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

It was great to spend some extra time at the IPM last week and great to see my fellow colleagues there as well. But the word on the back roads and on the streets at the IPM is that Foodland Ontario is on the chopping block by the Ford government.

The goal of this program is to encourage people to eat Ontario-grown food. We all know the slogan: "Good Things Grow in Ontario." Coined in 1997, by the way, this program helps farmers, processors and consumers. And do you know what, Speaker? It creates jobs—good jobs—in rural Ontario.

My question to this minister is this: Can he assure the farmers and processors of Ontario that this program will not be cut in any way, shape or form?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I thank the member across for asking this great question. I want to say that Foodland Ontario is one of the best programs for the horticulture sector in the province of Ontario that they've ever had to encourage people to buy our local products—the best food in the world, grown right here in Ontario. People are going to the stores and buying it because it was produced in Ontario.

I can assure you that his ears must either be not hearing anything, or hearing things that are not said, because obviously there has been no discussion from my ministry that

says we're going to do anything but improve and make sure that Foodland Ontario works for the people of Ontario.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that Mr. Gates assumes ballot item number 32 and Mr. Rakocevic assumes ballot item number 45.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I wish to inform the House that we have a former member visiting us today in the Legislature. The member for Burlington in the 41st provincial Parliament, Eleanor McMahon, has joined us this morning. Welcome.

TORNADOES IN OTTAWA

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa South informed me that he wishes to raise a point of order.

Mr. John Fraser: I'll be quick. I just wanted to add to what the member from Nepean–Carleton said. Ottawa South too was affected by the storm. There are some very small pockets in Hunt Club and Greenboro and South Keys where there has been some very serious damage. Some people have lost the contents of their houses and their roofs.

I want to thank the minister—I had a good chat with him—but I also want to thank all the residents who, over the weekend, were helping each other. It was really quite incredible. People were checking on neighbours, seniors, people with babies. One man said to me, "I didn't know it would take a storm like this for me to get to meet all my neighbours."

I would like to say one more thanks to Ottawa Hydro crews who spent about two days—

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Hydro One.

Mr. John Fraser: —it was Ottawa Hydro; thank you for correcting me—Ottawa Hydro crews fixing Albion Road. They were there for about two days. It's dangerous work, and we all owe them a debt of gratitude.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There being no deferred vote, this House is in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1149 to 1300.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mrs. Stevens assumes ballot item number 31 and Mr. Arthur assumes ballot item number 43.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CURRICULUM

Ms. Marit Stiles: On Friday, over 40,000 students from over 100 schools across this province walked out of class in a coordinated demonstration against this government's rollback of the health and physical education curriculum and the cancellation of the Indigenous curriculum writing sessions.

Like many of my colleagues, including the member for St. Paul's and others, I wanted to hear first-hand from these students. At Bloor Collegiate Institute in my riding of Davenport, students told me that they took this step because they feel that the government is ignoring their voices, and they said that the health and safety of their peers is being put at risk by imposing a 20-year-old curriculum. Here's what students had to say in their own words:

"We are here to protest against new changes to our curriculum made by our new Premier," one student wrote. "In health class, we will no longer be learning about same-sex relationships, online safety or gender identity."

Another student wrote, "I feel it is important to learn about the LGBTQ+ community, to learn about Indigenous issues and consent and many other topics that were taken away from us.... We should do all we can to restore the curriculum because the Premier wants us to basically go back in time and forget all of the progress we have made since 1998."

Those are the students' own words, Speaker.

It's time the government listened to the voices of Ontario students, parents and educators instead of those who seek to withhold this vital information from them.

I have here some of the letters that the students wrote. I'm going to be collecting more of them. These are their own words, and I promised the students I met with on Friday that I would carry those words here to Queen's Park. I hope that the Minister of Education is listening.

TORNADOES IN OTTAWA

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: On Friday evening, twin tornadoes with gusts of up to 250 kilometres per hour slammed into the quiet communities of Dunrobin, Trend-Arlington and Craig Henry. Homes, businesses and properties were left severely damaged. For over 30 hours, much of Ottawa was plunged into darkness. Even now, thousands are still without power.

But in darkness, Mr. Speaker, there is light. It is often said that we see the very best of people in times of crisis. First responders acted quickly, ensuring, thankfully, that no lives were lost during this crisis. We owe our police, fire officials and paramedics a great debt.

Beyond them, the people also stepped up. Families opened their doors to one another, sharing food, water and support.

Our very own MPP for Nepean, Minister MacLeod, along with her friends Councillor Jan Harder and Darrell

Bartraw, got to work right away setting up a command post and feeding centre. Over the course of the weekend, they fed thousands of individuals who needed a hot meal. I am proud to be able to serve alongside my friend the member for Nepean, who is a shining example of a public servant.

To all of those who stepped up to help, thank you for showing us the very best of humanity. To all of those who are struggling to rebuild their lives after this tragedy, know that your city and your province stand with you.

CURRICULUM

Ms. Doly Begum: I rise today with great pride to recognize the students across this great province who participated in the walkout to protest Premier Ford's move to scrap the revised health and physical education curriculum. Last Friday, thousands and thousands of students sent a clear message to this government, saying, "We do not consent to this government's changes."

I am proud of the schools in my riding of Scarborough Southwest that took part in this. I want to especially thank Taamara Thanaraja, from my former high school, SATEC at W.A. Porter, who successfully led their demonstration in that high school. It was extremely powerful to listen to the students who voiced their concerns, demanding Premier Ford and his government respect and listen to the students.

These students are concerned about their safety and health. The 1998 curriculum, that is 40 pages long, does not address bullying, cyberbullying, gender identity or consent. It was written at a time when students didn't have access to Google, for example, or sexting.

I am so proud to see that these students not only demanded a curriculum that reflects the modern reality of our technology, addressing children's safety and protection, but they also demanded a curriculum that reflects our history, highlighting the importance of learning about our Indigenous and First Nations people, which the Premier and this government failed to address.

I want to join all the students and say to this government: We do not consent to Premier Ford's move to change.

JEWISH HIGH HOLY DAYS

Mr. Roman Baber: When fall arrives, so do the Jewish High Holy Days. During this time, I receive lots of confused but well-meaning questions from friends and colleagues about the back-to-back-to-back-to-back celebrations in the Jewish community. So I'm delighted to offer the House this 60-second crash course.

Starting with Rosh Hashanah, the first day of the Jewish calendar, Jews welcome the arrival of the new year and wish each other Shana Tova. We eat apples dipped in honey for a sweet new year. I certainly wish that this year, being 5779, is as sweet as honey.

Yom Kippur arrives 10 days after Rosh Hashanah and is Judaism's holiest day of the year. Yom Kippur is the

Day of Atonement on which our individual fates are sealed for the coming year. It is observed by prayer and a 25-hour fast. There is strict prohibition against all work and entertainment. It is not a festive holiday; instead, we wish the Jewish community a good inscription for the coming year.

A few days after Yom Kippur arrives the holiday of Sukkot, which arrived last night, loosely translated into "huts" or "tents." For one week, we sit with family and welcome friends for meals in the sukka, a makeshift hut, the way our ancestors did for 40 years in the desert on their way to the promised land.

We cap the holidays with the day of Simchat Torah, loosely translated as "the joy of the Bible." On Simchat Torah, we celebrate the receipt of the Torah at Mount Sinai and the beginning of the annual cycle of the reading of the Torah, which lasts for 52 weeks a year.

It gives me great joy to conclude by wishing the Jewish community of Ontario and all around the world Shana Tova ve chag sameach, a happy new year and happy holidays.

LE DRAPEAU FRANCO-ONTARIEN

M. Guy Bourgouin: Le 25 septembre, c'est la journée des Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes, une journée où partout en Ontario les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes fêtent leur fierté francophone, une journée où les écoles francophones portent le vert et le blanc avec fierté, une journée où le lever du drapeau francophone se fait partout où il y a des francophones.

Monsieur le Président, je dois vous avouer que, cette année, la levée du drapeau francophone ne se fera pas dans la capitale ontarienne. Encore, ça démontre que le combat pour notre langue et notre culture n'est jamais terminé. J'invite tous les Franco-Ontariens et Ontariennes à communiquer avec la mairie de Toronto et à montrer leur déception.

Demain, j'invite tous les députés et les citoyens à venir à la levée du drapeau à Queen's Park à 9 h 45 et au dévoilement du monument francophone à 13 h 30 devant Queen's Park.

Faisons un effort. Même si on n'est pas francophone, un petit « bonjour » le matin pour supporter la francophonie, ça va loin, et c'est apprécié.

1310

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, let me begin by adding my personal thanks and compliments to all of the first responders and community members who have reacted and have helped victims of the tornadoes in Ottawa. I know that our hearts go out to everyone who has lost so much.

To all the hydro workers, whether at Hydro One or Hydro Ottawa, who have worked to restore power, or have already restored power but continue to work to get power

back to families across the affected area, thank you so much.

On Thursday of this week, I will be attending the 2018 Clean50 summit here in Toronto, where companies and individuals who have made significant contributions to sustainability and clean capitalism will be honoured. I can assure you that there will be many questions and concerns about Ontario's direction.

Our province in the last decade has been a leader in action against climate change. Under my predecessor, the shutdown of the coal-fired electricity plants was the largest contributor to greenhouse gas reduction in North America. Under my government, our action to require big polluters to pay and our then reinvestment in new clean technology, in housing retrofits and the encouragement of a clean auto and transit sector had put us on a track to meet our pollution reduction targets and to do our part to fight against climate change.

The Ford government has abandoned any attempt to take on this fight that threatens the very existence of our planet. Our children and our grandchildren deserve better. They deserve our best efforts, not deflection, not obfuscation, not outright denial.

I hope that the Ford government changes its mind, gets back on track, tackles the most significant—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the member to withdraw her unparliamentary comment.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: Withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

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

TORNADOES IN OTTAWA

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I'd like to echo the statements my colleagues have made today in the House. My thoughts and prayers go out to everyone who was affected by the tornado that struck Ottawa late last Friday evening, causing particularly devastating damage to the Dunrobin, Craig Henry and Arlington Woods areas.

I want to thank my colleague Minister MacLeod for her tireless efforts in feeding thousands of families affected by the tornado, Minister Clark for his speedy and expedient initiation of the disaster relief assistance for Ontarians program, and Premier Doug Ford for taking the time to visit those affected in Ottawa.

I'd also like to express my gratitude to Ottawa's front-line workers—the paramedics, police, firefighters, doctors and nurses, as well as city staff and all of the hydro workers—for their tireless efforts to help our citizens and restore power across Ottawa. All their hard work truly paid off.

Finally, I'd like to thank the people of Ottawa for stepping up to the plate and helping each other out. Thank you to Scott Batten, Stephen Pilon, Brent Schouten and Colleen Piercey for reaching out to me late last night to help to provide generators for a lady stuck in her hospital bed on the fourth floor of her apartment, generators for senior apartments as well as generators for subsidized and non-profit housing in Richmond. Thank you to Graham and Neil Green of Abby Hill Farms, who donated a

truckload of corn to help feed thousands affected by the blackout; and thank you to Mohamed Ali, owner of the Shoppers Drug Mart in Manotick, who provided those affected by the blackout a place to charge their medical devices and refrigerate their medication.

Mr. Speaker, it filled me with a great sense of pride to watch how our community came together during this time of need to help each other out and make sure everyone got the care and support they needed. Our city's true colours showed this past weekend, and I couldn't be more proud to represent such an amazing city.

TORNADOES IN OTTAWA

Mr. Joel Harden: As another Ottawa member, I also rise today to pay tribute to the people whose heroism has helped our city get back on its feet and brought us closer together, as our friends have already mentioned.

I'm in awe of the courage of people who rose to the occasion over the weekend: the members of IBEW Local 636, the hydro workers, who spent day and night restoring power; the paramedics, the firefighters and the doctors, the crisis workers; and also, frankly, other public officials like myself, working at the municipal level—people in Ottawa Centre like Catherine McKenney, Jeff Leiper and Riley Brockington—who kept Ottawa Centre residents daily apprised of power outages and options they had to look after themselves.

I'm also touched by other local examples. Last night, I attended a free barbecue hosted by the Ottawa mosque for residents who had lost food due to the power outage. Community organizations like the Parkdale Food Centre, the Causeway Work Centre and the Ottawa Food Bank all did so much to ensure that the vulnerable were fed.

We know that with the advent of climate change, Speaker, extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and more severe. Let's commit, all of us here, to ensuring we reduce emissions and we toughen up our infrastructure to better protect our communities from increasingly potent natural disasters.

Finally, I do want to echo what my colleagues have said. I offer my deepest sympathy to people who have lost their homes or experienced trauma or physical injury. Please contact my office if you're an Ottawa Centre resident. We have your back, and together we will rebuild our city.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Donna Skelly: Protecting our industries and workers during this time of trade uncertainty is paramount to my hometown of Hamilton and, indeed, to all Ontarians. That is why I want to thank the Premier and the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade for being proactive on this critical issue and working tirelessly to ensure that our government is doing our part for a deal to get done. This includes their travels last week to Washington as well as burning up the phone lines to US political and business leaders directly.

Mr. Speaker, it has been an eye-opener for me as I chair round-table meetings with business leaders and stakeholders right around the province to discuss the implications of the current NAFTA situation. Participants have spoken passionately, and the stakes are high. The consequences of continued uncertainty are dire. One in five Ontario jobs depend on Canada-US trade and investment and, as we remind the Americans, millions of jobs on the other side of the border, as well.

I look forward to hearing more. I have consultations in the coming weeks.

I want to assure the business leaders we have talked to thus far that your Premier and your government are standing shoulder to shoulder with you.

TRYENGINEERING

Mr. Deepak Anand: “Sometimes if a child can’t learn the way we teach,” counselled Ignacio Estrada, “maybe we should teach the way they learn.” Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge members of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers—Olivier Trescases, chairman of the Toronto section; Satish Saini, chairman, education committee; Nina; and Kate—who are doing just that in the GTA.

With a mission to bridge the gap between engineering education and practical workplaces, IEEE is working towards making meaningful advancements by integrating classroom studies with ongoing research and workplace practices for the best interest of the engineering community and the society as a whole.

TryEngineering is a unique program with a goal to raise interest in engineering careers, improve access to high-quality educational resources and show students how engineering can be part of their lives.

IEEE is the world’s largest not-for-profit technical professional organization, with 400,000 members in 160 countries. It truly has a global presence.

I’m thankful to IEEE for selecting Mississauga–Malton as a pilot area to implement this new and innovative program. As the MPP for Mississauga–Malton, I’d like to welcome and applaud the efforts of IEEE. Thank you, IEEE.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Toronto–St. Paul’s has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Premier concerning denouncing Faith Goldy. This matter will be debated Tuesday at 6 p.m.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I want to recognize the member for Spadina–Fort York on a point of order.

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to make this point of order.

I just wanted to introduce Frantz Améculeé, Huguette Améculeé and their friend Immaculee Adjanah. Frantz and Huguette are the grandparents of Erika Celestin, one of our new pages.

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

1320

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

2063434 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2018

Mr. Pettapiece moved first reading of the following bill: Bill Pr2, An Act to revive 2063434 Ontario Limited.

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): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

PETITIONS

CURRICULUM

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I’d like to table this petition in support of the students across Parkdale–High Park who participated in the walkout on Friday. I want to especially mention Thea Baines and Oscar Fellows for their leadership.

“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” Premier “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 and will be affixing my signature to it.

CURRICULUM

Ms. Jill Andrew: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I'd first like to give a shout-out to the kids of Forest Hill Collegiate Institute for their brave advocacy against Doug Ford's, our Premier's, antiquated—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I have to say to the member—I interrupt the member to again state that it's not appropriate to make political statements while you're introducing your petition, but you can read the text of your petition.

Ms. Jill Andrew: My apologies, Mr. Speaker.

“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 happily sign this petition and hand it off to my page Josh.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Jamie West: “Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“—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 proudly affix my signature to this, and I will give it to page Simon.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

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

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

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

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

I support this petition, add my name to it and give it to page Will.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition that is titled “Fund Our Schools.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas too many children are going to school in buildings without proper heating or cooling, with leaky roofs or stairways overdue for repair;

“Whereas after years of Conservative and Liberal governments neglecting schools, the backlog of needed repairs has reached \$16 billion;

“Whereas during the 2018 election, numerous members of the Conservative Party, including the current Minister of Education, pledged to provide adequate, stable funding for Ontario’s schools;

“Whereas less than three weeks into the legislative session,” Premier “Ford and the Conservative government have already cut \$100 million in much-needed school repairs, leaving our children and educators to suffer in classrooms that are unsafe and unhealthy;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Minister of Education to immediately reverse the decision to cut \$100 million in school repair funding, and invest the \$16 billion needed to tackle the repair backlog in Ontario’s schools.”

I couldn’t agree more. I’m going to affix my name to it and give it to page Molly to bring to the Clerk.

1330

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RECTIFICATION AU PROCÈS-VERBAL

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Mushkegowuk–James Bay.

M. Guy Bourgouin: Monsieur le Président, je voudrais faire une correction à ma déclaration de député. J’ai fait mention que la ville de Toronto ne ferait pas la levée du drapeau; je suis ici pour me corriger. Ça va bien être fait. La tradition va être faite comme dans le passé. Donc, je voudrais retirer ma déclaration. Merci.

Le Président (L’hon. Ted Arnott): Merci beaucoup.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STANDING ORDERS

RÈGLEMENT

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 20, 2018, on the amendment to the amendment to the motion regarding amendments to the standing orders.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Chatham-Kent–Leamington.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to the government House leader’s amendments to the standing orders of this House.

I think that when understood in the context of the role of the Legislature within Canada’s Constitution and the Westminster parliamentary system we use in Canada, the only opposition to these amendments would be a case of the old adage that some people like the liberties of a free society until those they disagree with employ those liberties.

The Canadian Constitution, one that has been evolving for 151 years to 803 years, depending on how you count the legal precedents, is a constitution based on the supremacy of Parliament. The elected Legislature makes and passes laws, and the civil service representing the crown applies those, resolving disputed applications of law, while also having a key role in repealing laws that can be proven, in a reasoned manner, to be unjust.

We in government do not begrudge those rights of other branches to provide checks and balances. We are, however, taking a clear stand for laws to be drafted and passed by the elected branch. This right must be renewed because when the Legislature ceases to reform, repeal and pass laws in the present moment for the good of the people

they govern, the application of coercive power towards the average person loses the consent of the people. Unaccountable and unelected persons having the primary power over the people places our society in a state of oligarchy at best and tyranny at worst. I'm sure that the opposition would agree with us on that.

The supremacy of Parliament and the exclusive right of the elected Legislature to pass laws require effective use of the House standing orders. Reasoned amendments from the opposition can serve a positive purpose. Madam Speaker, the positive incarnation of reasoned amendments is when they bring concerns of constituents to bear on legislation and, less often noted, act to present the agenda of the opposition party.

It was Hannah Arendt, a survivor of 20th-century totalitarianism and a scholar of political freedom, who pointed out that a great part of the unprecedented prosperity seen in countries that use the Westminster parliamentary model of government is that those opposed to a current government still engage in the system, presenting their case peacefully, as they know they are one change in government away from being able to legislate their own program.

What we've seen in the past eight weeks, Madam Speaker, is a degeneration of the use of reasoned amendments. Unfortunately, their increased frequency has not led to more debate but less debate; not to more clarity but less clarity, taking up the time needed to pass legislation.

Without these amendments to the standing orders, it would become impossible for the agenda laid out by this government to be passed. The opposition knows this, and that's disturbing when you take a moment to think about it. An attitude inside and outside the House is developing that no perspective outside that formulated by a particular group of media, business and academic interests—usually represented by the Liberal and New Democratic parties—has any right to influence public policy. We often see in the universities that anything not presently qualified by the words “progressive” or “left” is attacked as not deserving, even of freedoms of expression, association and conscience.

Madam Speaker, our model of government presumes that difference of opinion is both necessary and good for a free society, as no one has a monopoly on truth or good ideas, and therefore no one should have a monopoly on power.

After a House passes legislation, there are several checks and balances respecting this reality, as I've already noted. The system will fall apart if a government is forbidden from passing legislation the second that a governing party with ideas other than those of economic and cultural power brokers forms a majority.

Madam Speaker, it is in this context that we can now go amendment by amendment through the standing orders. I will read what the standing order will be after the amendments are applied, then explore the utility of the amended standing order to increased quality of debate as well as to passing legislation.

Amended standing order 6(b) will read as follows: “With notice, the government House leader may propose a motion to extend the hours of meeting during the last 12 sessional days in the fall and spring sessional periods provided for in clause (a) and during any extension thereof.”

Well, Madam Speaker, the opposition's amendments in the summer session took up 16 hours. We all know that a day in the House is not a consecutive eight or more hours of voting in the Legislature. Sixteen hours can take up to at least two days of House business, if not more, and with eight days, that math just simply would not add up to pass bills at the rate which the people of Ontario have been accustomed to for decades, going across governments of all parties.

Our amendment allows not only for more days but for an expansion of night sittings. Night sittings will ensure that the House considers more questions and that members on all sides have more time to debate the important pieces of legislation that we will be faced with.

It's in the spirit of extending more privileges of debate to the opposition, for the sake of bringing forward sincerely proposed ideas as well as presenting an alternative agenda for the people of Ontario, that we have amended standing order 35(e) to read as follows: “Following ministerial statements a representative or representatives of each of the recognized opposition parties in the House may comment for up to a total of five minutes for each party commencing with the official opposition, and one independent member may comment for up to five minutes.” This amendment is pretty straightforward, Madam Speaker.

1340

With the current status of the Ontario Liberal Party's caucus being seven MPPs, and the addition of a member from the Ontario Green Party, our government deems it important to ensure that those members have a voice in debates. Further still, this extra five minutes can allow members of all parties to take a break from toeing the party line and speak to the concerns of their constituents. Our government wants the grassroots of society in every community to have their concerns voiced in a productive way in the House.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Moving on, we are extending opposition time on Tuesdays and Wednesdays to balance what is no doubt the major point of contention to those amendments, those to section 43. With our amendment, section 43(a)(v) regarding opposition day debates will read that debates “shall be limited to two hours if held on a Monday or any other day that routine proceedings is scheduled for 1:05 p.m.” Madam Speaker, this amendment builds on our previous decision to move the start on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 3 p.m. to 1 p.m.

As we have no way of predicting when the opposition will engage in different filibuster tactics, we may require

more time on the key days of House business in the week, as we know that Thursday is devoted to private members' business, and Fridays to constituency matters. I might also add Friday, Saturdays and Sundays—just saying.

Having sat on the opposition side of the House, I do understand the need for opposition days. The increased flexibility of having extended and consistent time on all opposition days will help the opposition and grow our parliamentary tradition.

For full clarity, section 43(d) will read as follows: "After two hours of debate on an opposition day held on a Monday or any other day that routine proceedings is scheduled for 1:05 p.m., or at 5:50 p.m. on an opposition day held on a Tuesday or Wednesday, the Speaker"—or the Speaker of the day—"shall interrupt the proceedings and put the question without further debate. If a recorded vote is requested, the division bells shall be limited to 10 minutes. Such vote may not be deferred."

Madam Speaker, the House already limits motions to adjourn in two other instances. Standing order 46(a) holds that motions to adjourn may not be moved prior to routine proceedings, keeping them from being moved in the morning. Standing order 98(h) also limits the ability of members to move adjournment of the debate during private members' business. All this does is adjust time allocation motions on opposition days to that seen in the standing orders governing private members' business.

This does not denigrate opposition days or business in any way. Both opposition business and private members' business have certain rules which stand apart from those observed for debate on general government business.

Our government reserves the right, as government, to invoke existing standing orders to create consistency in when and how debates take place, countering earlier opposition charges that we were being ad hoc and arbitrary about time allocation. It is in the interest of consistency and predictability in format—two things that clarify true debate and distinguish it from smashing tables and kicking walls—that we are also amending section 47(b) to read as follows:

"(b) Two hours of debate, apportioned equally among the recognized parties, shall be allotted to debate on the motion, at the end of which time the Speaker shall without further debate or amendment put every question necessary to dispose of the motion. If a recorded vote is requested by five members, division bells shall be limited to 10 minutes. A motion to adjourn the House may not be moved during this debate, except upon unanimous consent of the House."

Madam Speaker, the new combination of section 43 and section 47, the appropriate use of reasoned amendments, as well as avoidance of deliberate disruption of the House like what we saw just a few weeks ago, will see the opposition meet more of their goals than the current strategy that they have been using.

Nothing will prevent a member who seeks to address the House on time allocation from moving adjournment. The subsequent division bells will remain as they are envisioned by the standing orders.

The reasoning for this motion is simply the efficient use of the House. It's to ensure that as much debate takes place as possible right here, right now, in the House, not as little as possible.

The efficient use of time is the motivator for our final amendment, the deletion of standing order 98(e). This order reads as follows:

"If consideration of private members' public business under this standing order is concluded before the expiry of the allotted two and one-half hours, the Speaker shall suspend the House for the balance of such time before putting the questions to the House."

The current party composition of our Legislature has produced a 31-minute suspension in the middle of Thursday afternoons, due to the smaller caucus size of two of the four elected parties. During this period, the House can neither debate nor divide over any issue.

We all know that it's already hard to pass a private member's bill. We also all know that these bills are essential to a healthy democracy, one where grassroots voices can influence public policy, not just party insiders.

If all four sitting political parties had full party status in the Legislature, standing order 98(e) would require the House to adjourn a debate in the middle of a third private member's bill or motion, because the time allotted to the individual member in each of the caucuses would then exceed two and a half hours. This would kill countless private members' bills, Madam Speaker, and we simply do not want that to happen.

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Private members' bills go beyond party politics and provide a voice to power for the grassroots in each constituency and, as such, must be protected from the technical loopholes in the standing orders.

Our position is for time allotted to private members' business, as governed by standing order 98(a), to be sufficient for the House to protect the rights of private members to debate business on Thursday.

Madam Speaker, as my colleagues in government will clarify these amendments further, let me just conclude by applauding an earlier statement from our government House leader, the Honourable Todd Smith. That is, if the opposition is truly concerned about a bill's effect on the common good, their goals and concerns are better served by making clear arguments and, most importantly, making a vote, not by making a vote impossible.

We're blessed to live in the greatest country in the world, and our Westminster parliamentary model is a pivotal reason for our greatness, because it embraces rather than condemns difference of opinion.

The opposition will need to utilize our system of reasoned debate to fully detail the alternative that they would legislate were they to one day form government. Our amendments, in fact, help them do that. If they continue to ignore the purposes of parliamentary debate and seek to create a muted Legislature, I suspect they will suffer the same fate in the next election that the Liberals did in the last election.

Madam Speaker, my colleagues in government will clarify these amendments further, so just let me conclude by applauding an earlier statement, again, from the Honourable Todd Smith. Again, I repeat: That is, if the opposition is truly concerned about a bill's effect on the common good, their goals and concerns are better served by making clear arguments and, most importantly, making a vote, not by making a vote impossible.

Again, I mentioned earlier, we're very fortunate to live in what I feel and I'm sure every member in this Legislature feels is the greatest country in the world. Our Westminster parliamentary model is a pivotal reason for our greatness, because it embraces rather than condemns differences of opinions.

The opposition will need to utilize our system of reasoned debate to fully detail the alternative that they would legislate were they to one day form government. Our amendments, in fact, help them do that. If they continue to ignore the purposes of parliamentary debate and seek to create a muted Legislature, I suspect they too—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I will try to add a few points to this debate on the motion to make changes to the standing orders and, speaking more specifically, to the amendments that were made to that motion.

It is clear by what the members have said so far that some of the changes that they are putting forward are focused on giving the sitting government more power.

It is clear that some of the changes that have been brought forward by the amendments brought forward by the independent members of the Liberal Party are there to bring a little bit more resources to that party.

The amendment that I have tabled to this motion is to give people a voice. The creation of a select committee of the Legislature to look at the standing orders, frankly, is long overdue. Most of you have never seen the standing orders, and you will be happy ever after if you never look at them. But for the people who live in this House, "standing orders" is a fancy term that says, "Here's what we can and cannot do."

For some of you who sit on boards, most of you know Robert's Rules of Order: "This is how you do things. These are the procedures." Well, the standing orders are about the same things, but they're about the House and its committees. They date back a very long time. The standing orders are needed because they bring clarity as to, how you move a motion forward, how a bill moves forward, what it is that you're allowed to do and not allowed to do. I respect all of this.

At the same time, I would tell you that it is long overdue that we take a look at those standing orders in the view of, this is 2018. I can tell you that for those of you who read the French version—I'm one of those—you will see that the entire text of the standing orders is written as if only men were ever elected, only men could sit in the chair. In French, we call it "le Président," but if it's a woman, as is the case for you, Madam Speaker, we call it "la

Présidente." There are ways to bring forward language that includes both. You could speak about "la présidence." That would include whether a man or a woman happens to be in the chair. None of this exists in the standing orders the way that they are written right now. They were written at a time when most people who were elected here were men. But I'm not. Neither are you. Neither is half of my caucus. We are all women.

Applause.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes, thank you.

Yet, the standing orders are written in such language that we don't see ourselves in this. So if we are going to make changes, why don't we take our time and look at them more broadly, to bring them up to 2018, to make them more reflective as to how this Legislature could be as effective as possible for our end goal?

Our end goal is clear. We are there to govern the province of Ontario. We are there to pass laws that will oversee how people in Ontario live their lives, access services, access programs, run their businesses. This is our job as legislators. This is what we do. In order to do our jobs as effectively as possible, we need standing orders that allow us to do that; that allow us to do this when you sit on the government benches and that allow us to do this when you sit in the opposition bench. You have to realize that all 124 of us were elected to represent all of the people of Ontario. When we all sit here together, the entire leadership of the province is there.

Do we need the standing orders to do our work? Yes, we do. Do the standing orders need to be refreshed? Yes, they do. Are the five or six recommendations that have been put forward needed? I would say, some of them, absolutely; others, not so sure. But what I would like is to not only focus on those five or six that have been put forward. There are many other aspects of the standing orders that need to be looked at.

When I look at some of the issues that I hear in my constituency, the number one issue that I hear about is Health Sciences North. That's the name of our hospital in Sudbury. Whether I hear about the overcrowding in our hospital—at Health Sciences North, we have no shower room. We have no patient lounge. We have no TV rooms. All of those have been changed into patients' rooms. It is not unheard of that somebody who is admitted from the emerg or after surgery is moved into what used to be a bathroom or what used to be a shower room or suddenly finds themselves with four other people in what used to be the TV room. Everybody always jokes that the TV is pretty good in there—they have one of those great big ones. But when you want to have a little bit of peace and quiet and are trying to recover, to share a room with other people—it's sometimes really hard to respect patients' privacy in those. So those are certainly issues.

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It is the mandate of the provincial government to provide health care services. It is the mandate of every MPP to bring forward the issues that they hear in their constituency that have to do with the programs and services of the provincial government. Our opportunities

to do this and to be effective are directly linked to what we can and cannot do, and all of those are written within the standing orders.

Am I allowed to show people what the standing orders look like? Because—I'm looking at the Clerk right now. This is the little book that we get our standing orders from. It's not a very good read, I must admit—

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's a good late-night read.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes, if you suffer from insomnia, you can start to read this book and it should help you greatly, because it's not easy to read. It's not my kind of reading, but I know that, by knowing the standing orders and by following the standing orders, I can become a better MPP.

Those are the rules of Parliament. Just think of any other sport that you do. If you know the rules of your sport, you will be a better athlete, and you will increase your chances of winning. For me, I look at the standing orders as—because I'm becoming more knowledgeable about the standing orders and because I know how to use them, I become a more effective MPP for the people that I represent. This is true for all of us.

Just for people that are watching: When you first get elected, we have the good people that are sitting here, from the Clerks' table, give us a crash course as to what's in the standing orders. They are very, very good at doing this introduction. The Clerks' table is always there to help us if we need any interpretation. They are the keepers of all of the rules. They know them inside and out. They are extremely good at what they do, and they are extremely helpful to all of us in this chamber who need to follow some of the orders.

Here, again, we come to a point where a review is needed. The government agrees that a review is needed, which is why they have put forward this motion that tables some changes to the standing orders.

But I would tell you, Speaker, right now, I can't help but see that the changes they are bringing forward are skewed. They are skewed toward giving the governing party more power. There is nothing wrong with the government having power. This is why we have elections. But when it comes to everybody here that has been elected, we all have a job to do. The people in government—I'm in opposition; I am there to hold the government to account.

Have we found the right balance? I will tell you right now that if the changes that have been put forward all pass, this balance will be skewed in the government giving themselves even more power.

Don't get me wrong: The government has way, way more power than any MPP and any group that is in opposition. The government has won the election, they have won the right to govern and they have the power to do so. In opposition, we have the responsibility to be the checks and balances.

We have the responsibility to make sure, if the government brings something forwards—did they really look at what impact this is going to have to the people of Cartier, who live in the riding of Nickel Belt? Did they know that such a thing exists in Sudbury and the effect of what

they're trying to do will be different? This is our job, to make sure that the laws they are bringing forward, the pieces of legislation they are bringing forward—but if you curtail this opportunity to bring balance, nothing good will come of it. We need to make sure that the government is able to carry out its mandate, but you need to make sure that the opposition is also able to hold the government to account, to point out when a piece of legislation is having an unforeseen effect on a riding or a part of a riding that people didn't know about. That's why we have representatives from all over the province; it's so that we represent the entire province and we can bring forward different perspectives to make things better.

The amendment that I had the pleasure of tabling is really to open this up. This is basically the opening of changes to our standing orders. Some of them are good, some of them not so much, but let's look beyond that, Speaker. Let's look at how we make sure that each and every one of us has an opportunity to be heard and to make things better for the people of Ontario so we can all prosper, so that we can all have a good life, no matter where we live and no matter who we are.

This is a huge responsibility that sits on each and every one of our shoulders. Whether you have never been in the riding of Nickel Belt or you've lived there all of your life, it makes no difference. Each and every one of you is responsible to make sure that people who live in my riding have equal opportunity, have equal access, and that means bringing forward pieces of legislation.

How do you make sure that the pieces of legislation that you bring forward are attaining those goals? Well, you make sure that the opposition continues to be able to do their job. This is how Parliament works. It's not always perfect. We are human beings, after all, and sometimes human beings come with all their frailties and all the errors in their ways, but at the end of the day this is the best system we have come up with: to have a party in power and have opposition holding this party to account.

The motion that we have there is a step—part of it in the right direction and part of it not, but it certainly is an opportunity for all of us to look at the rules that govern and ask ourselves if it's time that we have a more in-depth look. I'm looking at our Clerks right now. They know the standing orders inside out. We have the resources to be able to move this forward, to make sure that what we want to do, we give ourselves an opportunity to do that.

On est en train de parler des règles qui gouvernent l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario. Dans les règles qui gouvernent l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario, la plupart de ces règles ont été écrites il y a des décennies de ça. On parle de v'là longtemps : depuis que le Parlement de l'Ontario existe, on a des règlements. Les règlements sont vraiment pour nous dire comment est-ce que le Parlement doit fonctionner, comment est-ce que le Parlement s'assure qu'on est capable de passer les meilleures lois possibles pour les Ontariens and Ontariennes.

En ce moment, le gouvernement de M. Ford veut faire des changements à ces directives-là. Dans les

changements qu'ils veulent faire, certains changements sont assez faciles à comprendre. Le changement de jeûdi après-midi, lorsqu'il nous reste du temps, puis on n'est pas capable de rien faire avec ces 36 minutes-là, oui, certainement.

Mais il y a d'autres changements qu'ils veulent faire qui, là, sont beaucoup plus problématiques, des changements qui permettent au gouvernement de se donner plus de pouvoir. Ça, il faut vraiment regarder à long terme quel effet ça va avoir sur les lois, sur les règlements qui sont faits ici à Queen's Park. Les lois qui sont passées—la plupart des lois vont rester là pendant des décennies. Quand on fait une loi, ce n'est le genre de chose où on revient faire des changements tous les deux ou trois ans. La plupart des projets de loi sont là pendant longtemps.

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Le système a été fait avec première et deuxième lecture, aller en comité, troisième lecture et sanction royale. Tout ça a été mis en place pour s'assurer que, lorsqu'on met une loi, on prend le temps d'écouter tous les députés de tous les partis, pour s'assurer qu'on n'a pas de changements qu'on n'avait pas vus venir et que, par inadvertance, on ne fait pas de dommage à une communauté ou une partie de l'Ontario—pas qu'on en avait l'intention ; mais que, parce qu'on est allé trop vite, on a fait des erreurs. Les erreurs dans des lois ont souvent des conséquences néfastes à très long terme, donc les règles du jeu que le gouvernement veut changer en ce moment, c'est quelque chose d'important.

Moi, ce que je vous dirais, madame la Présidente, c'est que oui, ç'a besoin d'être changé. Un changement que j'aimerais voir c'est qu'en ce moment, quand on parle des règles du jeu—elles ont été écrites à un temps où on s'attendait à ce que ce ne soit que des hommes ici. Donc lorsqu'on parle de votre poste, madame la Présidente, on vous appelle « le Président ». Je ne sais pas si vous avez remarqué, mais ce n'est pas le bon nom, hein ? Moi, je ne suis pas un député ; je suis une députée. Vous, vous n'êtes pas le Président ; vous êtes la Présidente. Ça serait bien, si on est pour faire une revue, qu'on s'assure qu'on ait un langage épïcène, qu'on s'assure qu'on ait un langage inclusif—autant du côté anglais que français—parce que maintenant, je suis très fière de dire que dans mon caucus, 50 % des députés sont des femmes, et qu'ici à l'Assemblée il y en a plusieurs également.

C'est une chance de revoir les règles du jeu, mais assurons-nous qu'on ne laisse pas passer cette opportunité-là. L'amendement que nous avons fait à la motion, c'est de créer un comité qui aurait des membres des deux partis, le Parti conservateur et le Parti néo-démocrate, mais qui inclurait également des représentants du Parti libéral et le représentant du Parti vert, pour que tout le monde, de façon aussi collaborative que possible, ait la chance d'être entendu et ait la chance d'amener des changements qui ne seront pas pour donner aux conservateurs plus de pouvoir ou pour donner aux membres du Parti libéral plus de ressources, mais qui seront vraiment là pour s'assurer que le Parlement fait bien son travail et pour nous permettre de passer de meilleures lois.

I see that my time is up, Speaker. I would encourage everybody to really look at the amendment that we have put forward. The amendment is not to give the Conservatives more power or to give the independent members or the Liberal Party more resources. The amendment is really to give everybody a chance to look at the standing orders, to bring them up to 2018, to make sure that it allows us to have as good laws brought forward as possible, so that every Ontarian, no matter where they live, feels that they are supported equitably by their government and that their government takes the time to listen to them and their concerns through the voice of their MPP.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Before I continue with further debate, I will remind the members that if they have side conversations—right now, there are five going on—if they would like to have them, perhaps they could take them elsewhere.

Just as a point of clarification for the member who had asked about the standing orders and whether or not it was a prop: Many of the members have been using the standing orders as they're talking. Feel free to refer to them; we encourage that. If used as a prop, then it's a problem.

I recognize the member for Hastings–Lennox and Addington for further debate.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today I rise to speak in favour of government notice of motion number 5, a modification of the standing orders for the duration of the 42nd Parliament to increase and involve more members in debate in this chamber. At this time I would like to thank the member who spoke previously on this bill for her thoughtful comment. I'm hopeful that she as well will recognize that this is a good bill, and I look forward to her support on this issue.

All of us know that after an unprecedented five weeks of legislative sittings—and standings, on many occasions—this past summer, there is so much to be done. There is much to be considered, much to be heard and, no doubt, many, many hurdles to cross before we break for Christmas.

As the government caucus Chair, I can tell you, I can tell this House and I can tell this province that our Premier, our cabinet and every one of our members are primed and ready to continue doing what we said we would do for the people of Ontario.

So it is for that reason—and we do have much to do, and miles to go before we sleep on a long winter's night—that our House leader has launched this enhancement of our democracy.

The opposition has chosen a path of obfuscation and ideological chicanery to show its enduring support for the past government—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The language does need to be parliamentary. The member will withdraw.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): You need to stand and withdraw.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Withdraw.

Clearly, there are members who want the devastating legacy of the previous government to linger longer. But we don't want it to linger longer. On Friday—so sad—we learned of the depths of the previous government's deceit, yet the opposition didn't even blink. We learned Friday from the independent audit that our deficit is now \$15 billion, many, many billions greater than predicted in the spring budget that, at the time, was delivered with straight faces, despite belonging on the Cartoon Network.

And the opposition today, then their bosom buddies, still appear to be their BFFs by their ongoing antics—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): With respect, if the member would please be directed to speak to the amendment to the amendment to the motion. This is the debate on the floor. I'm looking to the Clerks for guidance. I said that right? The amendment to the amendment to the motion. Thank you.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

If I may—obviously, we're trying to set a course of direction for this House so that we can be accessible but so that we can get things done. We're not just going to sit back and wait while we undergo delay, delay, delay.

When we take a look at the record of the government of that time, I think there isn't a person in Ontario—and they certainly decided so by their vote. They made a mess of things, to be blunt, despite our province's industrious people, the powerful mosaics of our ideas, our culture and our intellects, our generational wisdom and our historic record of fighting for and achieving the first responsible government in the British Empire. That happened when this was Upper Canada—for those who forget our history—decades before we joined with the other colonies to form the Dominion of Canada in 1867.

But even during that time, there were rascals back then. Yet we have modern rascals in this House and across our country. They thought themselves bright when they introduced a dozen nonsensical bills riffing on zebra-striped mussels, which are no joke—in my riding, zebra mussels are no joke; they're a serious challenge. They did it simply to waste the time of this chamber and to take away from legitimate bills whose actions are impatiently awaited by the people of Ontario.

Unlike the rascals opposite, this government here is a government for the people, and we don't introduce nonsense tongue-twisters intended to tie up the officers and the Speaker of this House in malicious wordplay geared to generate ridicule of this democracy.

No, Mr. Speaker, we're here to get things done, and we have given but a taste of that thus far, given our historic and unprecedented achievements in this chamber in July, August and September.

We will engage in debate with the opposition in the morning, in the afternoon, at night and after midnight, as we already have. We will give them the opportunity to speak that they would deny others by their tricks and their sleight of tongue.

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This summer, this juvenile trickery—my apologies to juveniles for the slur—delayed needed change in Ontario. We weren't here to avoid—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I will be perhaps a bit clearer. Right now, the debate that is happening is on the amendment to the amendment to the substantive motion. Much of the unparliamentary language, I feel, is perhaps resulting from the fact that we are not debating the amendment to the amendment to the substantive motion. I will encourage the member to please make sure that his remarks are in order, as directed by the Clerks.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Thank you, Madam Speaker. What I'm trying to debate is giving the people the opportunity to be heard, to be able to have members in this House have the opportunity to speak and to have more of an opportunity to be able to participate in this democratic process.

We have independent members in this House. The original bill supported them by the motion. The independent members in this House won their seats, too. They have rights, and they deserve a chance to speak, all of them. The current standing orders that we have before us, even without amendment, exclude them, which would then give them rise to rise from their seats and could exclude them from the chamber. Well, I don't think there's a member in this House who wants that. We want everybody to have that opportunity. We want all of Ontario democracy to have all of their voices heard, whether it's a squeak, a Churchillian reflection, a considered opinion or even an ideological tangent.

The people of Ontario can judge the voices in this House by the content of their character, just as they have read in Hansard, as I mentioned previously—the Speaker does not want me to go down that road, so I will not go down the road about the zebra mussels. But I invite all interested citizens who have the opportunity to read Hansard to simply read Hansard and see whether or not the mussels were in the beach or if they're just a figment.

Anyway, every member elected deserves to be heard in this House, and not just those with a fine new leader over there, or a departed leader or a departing leader. So we're proud to give, with this bill, time to those ignored by the current standing orders.

Now, regrettably, in many of our ridings we had robot calls to constituency offices where people liked to complain that we were stifling, with this bill and with the motion, democratic voices. That was a claim that was found ridiculous by a three-judge appeal panel last week. In this House, we were doing the very opposite by expanding the chamber hours and hearing out each and every member of this House.

I can only imagine now the improvement, how we will be programmed to receive this bill when we add at least an additional 40 hours of debate and give more microphone time to the independent members of this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot put up with and/or afford to have our constituency offices tied up, phone lines and staff, blocking those in need of help, and people, because they're either confused or haven't had their voice heard in

this House, arrogantly and pejoratively treat constituency staff in a manner in which no one should be treated.

This bill's extension of night sittings will give comfort to those who recall when they had an essay due for a class and simply lacked enough time. Under the current rules, that can happen here. Now, Madam Speaker, night sittings can proceed on only the final eight nights of the season. As they precede the sessional Christmas break, when everyone has things to do and places to go in their riding, they create what can be classified as logjam anxiety. Here, we are just adding a modest four additional night sittings, making for 12 in total. More debate just before the Christmas break: the proverbial stressed essay writer's wish come true.

Sadly, we've had members in this House suggest, orchestrate and potentially egg on illegal demonstrations in the galleries, as we recently exhibited here on Bill 5 and Bill 31. I would certainly pray that this will not be a regular approach to blocking Ontario democracy. Public galleries in this Legislature deserve more respect than has been shown recently by the howling, sympathy-seeking advocates of mob—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I feel that we've had the conversation at length about the need to not impute motive in the House. I would encourage the member to adhere to that.

A reminder: This is indeed a debate to the amendment to the amendment to the motion. All members will find it more helpful to direct their remarks to and through the Chair to ensure that I'm not called "Mr. Speaker," because I am indeed not "Mr. Speaker."

I would like the member to withdraw.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Withdraw.

Madam Speaker, I would point out that I prefaced my remarks today by complimenting the member opposite on her amendment, suggesting that it's a contribution to this debate, to the overall—

Interjection.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Yes, I did, as a matter of fact—to the overall betterment of a bill, as proposed. Of course, it will be up to the House to decide on the merit of the amendment and, of course, on the motion. When I made that point, I made it with the recognition that the motion was needed. What I'm trying to demonstrate to this House is why this motion is so needed. Complemented by an amendment—time, of course, will decide whether or not that is the case.

But, Madam Speaker, this bill and the motion, I do believe, gets it right. So I'm quite content to take the motion on its own footing because every member is given greater opportunity to impart her or his pearls of wisdom, their incisive analysis, and their demonstrative wit and wiles.

Yes, we will hear 40 more hours of debate per session, but we will also see arcane House interruptions—because of the presumptive three recognized parties—disappear due to the currency now of only two such parties, which will impact how we are able to proceed with these motions and amendments.

But the elected or temporarily appointed leaders of other parties who sought enough seats to be recognized, but failed, will still have the opportunity to have their voices heard, and be able to wow potential voters with their brilliance and their balance, their brinkmanship and their bravado, even if only in their own imaginations.

I'm a fan of debate; I'm encouraging it, as a matter of fact, Madam Speaker. And so does this well-reasoned bill, which comes from combing out the dandruff left behind by the last Parliament, when there were three parties, two of which voted together 97% of the time.

But we believe in democracy. We could easily advocate to keep the green singleton party and the red minivan caucus on the sidelines. Indeed, the current rules prior to this motion and/or the amendment will largely accomplish that. That is not, Madam Speaker, what democracy calls for, because we believe in democracy.

Ontario is a place to stand and it's a place to grow. As much as it is ours to recover, sadly, it's a place where others can crow. But things have been fouled up. Our province, though, has a history that some are never taught but should be—the genesis of what we are and who we are and what our parliamentary process is. It also has a gradually emerging pre-history and may one day be more clear; it may also be more well taught.

Madam Speaker, I come from an area founded by 10,000 Loyalists, the first Canadian citizens in this area, many who first landed in my riding in 1784. The Mohawks in Hastings county at Tyendinaga in May and those from New Jersey, Connecticut and New York at Adolphustown in June: They were all loyal to the crown and our process and our systems. They worked with us over the years to develop our Constitution as well. They built our province on that loyalty, despite almost none of them being English. Loyal voices were heard when responsible government was demanded, and it changed over the years.

That is why we are in this bill tweaking the rules to add 40 more hours of debate and to listen to the reasoned amendments coming forward from across the aisle, and perhaps from the government. We are prepared to sit through more night sittings and allow more flexibility for all members to be heard through a natural flow of actions and ideas.

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Madam Speaker, we want to return to a day when Ontario led the way, when we were the engine of Canada, and our Constitution and the representation in here and our processes created that. That has, sadly, fallen by the wayside over the last while because perhaps our constitutional rights and our constitutional rules have not adapted to the times that they could have and should have.

When we take a look back after World War II—I know my father was a veteran—we certainly didn't get complacent. We modified and we changed as we went. We welcomed waves of immigrants who became fellow Ontarians and helped us collectively to build our cities and our collective dreams. We opened up the 400-series highways and power plants and we learned how to live better electrically, and we improved our Legislature step by step along the way. Every year, a new motion that

would help ease the entrance of bills would help us improve our procedure that would help us get a better result for each and every Ontarian.

Today, what I would like to do is personally thank the fine member for Quinte, our government House leader, for introducing this bill and basically making it possible for amendments or motions to deal. It will help of course. I really do believe that the purpose of it is to continue to help our House from falling into dysfunction. More deeply, I think it reflects our ongoing collective loyalty to the principles which brought our province to this.

I'd love to talk at great length about Sir John A. Macdonald and his contribution to our political process and to the evolution, but Madam Speaker just doesn't have time, and I understand that. But here we are, members from across this province, from the urban areas, the rural areas, and I can tell you the great ideas—Sir John A. was from a small town, though. Great ideas come from small towns, villages and rural enclaves. They did in those days, and they still do now, and it's not always according to "big government knows best."

Consultation? That is what we need, more of it, and that's why I welcome amendments. I welcome the original motion today. I think it's an absolute improvement to providing more access to members from across this House and across this province to participate.

Madam Speaker, words matter. In this House words matter, and sometimes you pass judgment on whether or not our words are appropriate, and I can appreciate that. Actually, I think we would have a difference of opinion. There's much that I would have preferred to say today but I am not now because you might deem it a little unparliamentary; I consider it to be more accurate and thoughtful. However, your judgment is supreme and I accept that at this particular point.

More debate time: That's the bottom line. It's going to give Ontarians an additional earful of what they've elected. So let us really all aspire to the principles which founded and grew and sustained this wonderful province. Let's reach up and touch the sky together, Madam Speaker.

I have a little bit of time left and I'm going to pass this, with your permission, over to the member for Northumberland—Peterborough South.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member from Northumberland—Peterborough South for the remaining time.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just if I could briefly speak to the subamendment here: I've been looking through, reading it, and we see a lot referenced: independent Liberal members and a bunch of concessions made. We all knew heading into the last election that Liberals were entitled to their entitlements, but now they're putting forward that they're entitled to special treatment here. We see divisions made that they shall receive 20% of the time and that they'll then divide a smaller amount to the Green Party. Oh, how thoughtful of them.

The bottom line is that Ontarians sent a clear message in the last election when they sent the former governing party and reverted them down to seven seats. They are now independent members and it's up to those independent members to divide their time equally, not with special entitlements for Liberal members. They're not Liberal members; they're independent members of Liberal—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. Before I continue with further debate, a reminder to all members so that they are clear, the amendments are to the motion. They are put forward by Madame Gélinas, but the amendment to the amendment is put forward by Madame Des Rosiers, which is what we are debating here today.

I think in the interest of preserving or elevating the tone, there should be no question as to whether the language is parliamentary. I would encourage all members to use their best judgment.

I will continue. The member from London North Centre for debate.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's my pleasure to rise today and to discuss this issue. However, when we take a look at the orders of the day, we shouldn't be talking about changing the standing orders. While I'm aware we're talking about the government's motion to change the standing orders and an amendment to an amendment, we're talking about how this House operates. Really what we're talking about here today is power. We should, instead, be talking about emergencies: hallway medicine, hydro rates, long-term care, housing, mental health, food insecurity, education and much, much more. Instead, we're standing here talking about how this House operates. We're talking about power and who gets what time and how.

The recent tornadoes that rocked the Ottawa region was an urgent issue and it needed to be addressed immediately. I know that my colleagues and I would take no issue with meeting on weekends or late into the night to make sure that people got the assistance they immediately needed. Instead, we recently met to discuss how the government could fundamentally change an election mid-stream, in the middle of the night.

When we look at the changes to the standing orders, we have to ask ourselves, "Can we look forward to more talk of enacting the 'notwithstanding' clause while the majority of Ontario sleeps?"

Today we are debating how the government can modify the standing orders and the amendments to the amendments, and how power can be consolidated and how they can take away the official opposition's ability to question the government's decisions and provide sober second thought on pieces of legislation. These are choices that impact not just those of us in the room, but future governments as well.

The chamber in which we now gather has beautiful and ornate architecture and decoration. Like any other art form, it includes meaning. On the government side, the iconography includes the image of a hawk. You'll notice it up there just in between the two rounded arches. The

eagle, or hawk, is a symbol. It is a reminder to the official opposition to watch the government carefully: “Watch like a hawk” or “Have eagle eyes.” I’m sure you’ve heard the saying.

Over the official opposition, the iconography is different. The symbol here is an owl. It’s a reminder that the government needs to listen to the opposition and keep wise counsel. Unfortunately, this lesson seems to be lost or forgotten at this point.

There seems to be an inclination with this government to rush and rush and rush. I recognize, as do others on this side of the House, that certain items require expediency. We know that it is urgent to assist people in crisis, people who are suffering, people who have no hope, perhaps people without healthy food or clean water. However, ramming through legislation and removing the opposition’s ability to provide sober second thought on legislation is simply wrong.

There are few among us who know the right answer each and every time we have to make a decision. Instead, we ask for the assistance of others when we are stuck or at an impasse. This makes good sense. Much of the time an outside individual can provide that clarity that we cannot within ourselves, can provide objectivity, can consider factors and consequences we might have missed. It’s the human thing to do.

In the Western classical age of Greece and Rome, playwrights discussed themes that still resonate today. The upstart youth barrel in, thinking they know the world, without care or consideration for their wise elders. Contrariwise, the older generation would lament the loss of discipline and tradition with the younger generation, whose ideas would never work.

Everyone knows the story of Oedipus, whose destiny was foretold by an oracle. Rather than heeding advice and listening to others, he fulfilled the oracle’s prophecy in murdering his father and marrying his mother. You see, Oedipus suffered from hubris, or excessive pride. An excess of pride and a lack of listening to wise counsel is a recipe for disaster.

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Between these two is the answer: Both failed to listen to the other. The theme is still present today when a child becomes a teenager. They seem to know everything. They don’t listen to parents or adults who have been through much of the same situations. We see the same narrative in popular depictions of the 1960s, and it still shapes contemporary debates over social media and technology. Far too often, adults don’t truly grasp or understand the pressure and unique circumstances of growing up in a changed world.

I’m sure all of us in the House have heard the saying, “There are three sides to every story.” If a young person could speak frankly to an adult who listened with an open mind and heart, and the favour was returned, misunderstandings and mistakes would cease to occur. Listening to someone else is never a mistake.

However, by changing the standing orders and limiting the powers of the opposition, the government is illustrating an inability to listen.

Active listening is an essential skill that teachers in this province are uniquely familiar with. Socrates’s famous dictum—that an unexamined life is not worth living—applies even to this day. Teachers, by their very profession, are interested in how the mind operates and how we learn best. This involves thinking about thinking, or metacognition.

Allow me a moment, Madam Speaker, to illustrate this with a story. When people study, they use highlighters to mark relevant passages for use later, but this activity isn’t something that helps us grow and change. You see, people highlight passages and ideas that they already agree with, things that make sense to them, things that don’t challenge them or help them grow. Steven Katz, who is a leader in educational thought, writes that we should instead interrupt that sort of activity intentionally, which thereby promotes growth and self-development. We should highlight ideas that we don’t agree with, things that don’t make sense and things that challenge our perceptions. This allows us to test our current assumptions, weigh evidence and form conclusions based on multiple perspectives. It’s good pedagogy in the classroom, and it’s good procedure here in the assembly.

However, the change to the standing orders not only enacted by this government, but then the amendment suggested by the member from Ottawa–Vanier are simply all about power, not about the proper operation or procedure of this House.

While there is great value in listening to those with different experiences than yours, we need to all learn about empathetic listening. It’s how we can move outside of our own subjective and lived experience and learn from others. This is why the member from Timmins was suggesting that bills should be travelled. We should be listening to the perspectives of the people who are affected by legislation. This type of consultation is essential for us to see beyond our blind spots and work to find common ground and solutions with others.

I was reminded of this fact just this last Friday as I attended the opening night of a production in my home riding. It was called Prom Queen: The Musical. It was at the Grand Theatre in my riding of London North Centre. Watching it made me recall the difficulty many face when they’re coming out of the closet. Yet here was a boy who challenged norms and stereotypical thinking but also listened to differing views, heeded advice from friends and ultimately won.

While the opening night was a huge cause for celebration, the production’s success was far from certain in the very beginning. Last year in my riding, the Thames Valley District School Board and the Catholic school board made a massive mistake. Each year, students have the opportunity to perform on a professional stage what is known as the High School Project. School boards provide some of the funding to facilitate this event. This year, the production, of course—as I had mentioned earlier—was Prom Queen. As I alluded to, the play centres on the struggles of Marc Hall, who wanted to take his boyfriend to prom. The

problem? It was 2002, and he attended a Catholic high school.

The boards made the decision that this play showed teachers, religious figures and school board officials in a negative light. When the withdrawal of funding was made public, the response from the community—who raised over \$70,000—was fundamental. The board ended up being shamed for reversing their decision and decided to fund the project.

The reason for my point, Madam Speaker, is that had the board listened to differing views, such as those in the opposition, they could have asked that the production simply include a prologue to say, “This was a moment in time—2002. Look how far we’ve grown. Look at how we have promoted equity, diversity and inclusion.” Yet their decision to not listen—a decision that was kept under wraps for over a month—caused them shame when the greater community learned about it. In addition, unfortunately, it also reinforced the same type of misunderstanding, negativity and prejudice that the gay community has struggled against.

I think this provides an illustrative example for us—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I am pleased to hear that this is going to provide an illustrative example. I again encourage members to make it clear to the Chair that their remarks are indeed to the amendment to the amendment to the substantive motion, please. I’ll give every member much latitude, but please circle back.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Decisions should be made with the public in mind and should also be in consultation with the public, as suggested by the member from Timmins.

The member from Ottawa–Vanier has suggested that some changes to the standing orders be modified such that they are given greater time in this House. What we also must come back to and remember is that we are here as democratically elected officials. The people of Ontario have decided that there should be, by their vote, seven members representing the independent or Liberal party.

In this discussion of the standing orders and power, these decisions on the changes to the standing orders should not be made by elite groups of individuals or people seeking power.

Speaking frankly, Madam Speaker, we have to really contend with the public opinion that indicates that the government is not listening to others. It’s not my intention to use my time here to re-enter the debate surrounding Bill 5 and then Bill 31, but I must point out that I heard from countless Torontonians who felt that the government did not listen to their opposition to the government’s interference in the municipal election.

The Premier’s warning that he would repeatedly use the “notwithstanding” clause was of great concern. We were here that evening—and this does tie in, because it’s talking about the standing order in which we were talking about having more midnight sittings. Concerned citizens were lined up all around and occupied this space. They were around the assembly at all hours of the evening, protesting what was going on here.

I was proud to see many of my colleagues with the official opposition address and engage this crowd of concerned Torontonians. This is how governments should respond to the needs of the people. This is what the standing orders should be changed to reflect. The standing orders should be changed such that we are soliciting the opinions of the public, letting them know how legislation will impact them and allowing things to go to committee, not simply changing the amount of time independent members have to speak or, where there is an independent member, how much time that individual has to speak.

My constituents in London North Centre have expressed very grave concerns about what has been happening in this House in terms of the potential for the “notwithstanding” clause to be used. We have to take a step back and consider that this government wants to push bills through the assembly late at night and without public consultation. The standing orders should be modified to allow that sort of discussion and that sort of debate.

But not only that, the same quality that I’ve been talking about reared its head this morning when the Premier spoke to the media about the events last week and his plans for the future. He didn’t allow the media to ask questions. He didn’t allow there to be any debate. This is troubling behaviour, and it threatens to drag Ontario backwards.

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The Premier criticized the previous government for its lack of transparency. This government has been equally secretive about what information it makes public and when. Let’s, all of us, learn from the mistakes of the past—

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Point of order.

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

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I question if this is relevant to the amendment to the amendment. It would be nice if he spoke to that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I will again encourage the member to stick to the debate, which is the amendment to the amendment to the substantive motion.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I’d like to use the remainder of my time to urge my colleagues on the other side of the floor to think about the precedent we’re setting with the changes to the standing orders. Standing orders are here to govern how this House operates, to govern how debate is registered and how power is used. We need to not just simply think about our present moment but also the future.

My colleague the member from Timmins talked about how bills were travelled and how standing orders were used once upon a time. Also, my colleague from Waterloo talked about members who are now on the government side and what they had formerly said about changes to the standing orders.

When we look at all of these different amendments, we need to think: What is going to happen in the future? How will this have an impact? I think we all remember, in 2003, when the party which we represent in the official opposition was not given the same sort of latitude and the same sort of leeway and the same sort of benefits that the

member from Ottawa–Vanier now seeks. For that reason, we have to question this amendment to the amendment.

I wanted to conclude by saying that power is fleeting. We will be remembered by our actions, and nobody will ever forget the cautionary tale of the former Liberal government. When in power, we should surround ourselves with people who don't necessarily agree with us. Dialogue means words and ideas are shared between individuals—ones which they don't necessarily agree with.

The previous government of Kathleen Wynne sold off Hydro and will always be remembered by that. For that reason, we have to think: If we are making these modifications to the standing orders, what is their purpose? What is the benefit? How are they serving the people of Ontario? For that reason, I think we should seriously question providing greater time to the independent members, as the member from Ottawa–Vanier has put forward with her amendment. We should also consider how these standing orders are being changed. Is this really for the good of the people of Ontario? Is this really something that is promoting effective discussion, dialogue and debate?

For my last couple of questions: How will this government be remembered? Do representatives want to be remembered as people who have changed the rules to benefit themselves? Does this government want to be known as a government that listens to everyone?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and one-half hours of debate on the motion. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Minister?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: We would like the debate to continue, please.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): And a reminder to all members to refer to any members in the House by their ridings or their titles—a good reminder.

I recognize the member for Willowdale for his inaugural address, I understand.

Mr. Stan Cho: It is my sincere privilege to rise in the people's House today to deliver my inaugural speech.

Applause.

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you. Strap yourselves in, everyone.

Over the past three months, I've started to feel more and more comfortable in this chamber, and I have to say I look forward each and every single day to joining my colleagues, on both sides of the House, to serve the people of my community and all Ontarians.

I'd like to begin by thanking my colleagues for their guidance, support and encouragement in my first days here at Queen's Park. It truly is a testament to our collective purpose here. It doesn't matter if we are from different parties, from rural or urban ridings, veterans or newly elected members. At the end of the day, I believe that we all share the same goal: a better, more prosperous Ontario.

It does feel a bit odd to call this my inaugural speech. We've had a very busy and productive start to the 42nd Legislature, and I've already had the opportunity to address this House on a number of important issues like climate change, ending the longest university strike in Canadian history, and reducing the cost of living for families in my riding.

I've also already had the opportunity to table a private member's bill, Garrett's Legacy Act, which will help to ensure that children in our communities are safe at play.

So for my official inaugural speech, I'd like to take a few minutes to talk about the greatest riding in Ontario, Willowdale, the challenges we face as a neighbourhood and the opportunities we have to prosper.

I'd also like to speak about the path that has led me here and what I hope to accomplish in the coming years.

Willowdale is an amazing community, and I am so proud to call it home. It is the northernmost part of the city of Toronto, and it straddles the line between urban and suburban. It is incredibly diverse in almost every way. We have densely packed condo towers along Yonge Street, which cuts the riding almost evenly down the middle. On either side are quiet residential streets of single-family homes, where it's not uncommon to see kids playing street hockey or chasing an ice cream truck.

Willowdalers, or Willowdalian—there's some debate about that—are also incredibly diverse. Over half of our population was born outside of our country, and we are home to the largest community of Koreans and Persians in Canada.

Willowdalers are proud of their individual heritages. Our main gathering place at Mel Lastman Square is constantly filled with festivals celebrating the lunar new year, Hanukkah, Chuseok, Nowruz, Philippine Independence Day, and many other events.

But Willowdalers are also proud of their collective community—as Torontonians, as Ontarians and as Canadians. There's no celebration quite as big as Canada Day. We are tolerant, caring and strong.

Earlier this year, our community suffered a terrible tragedy that none of us could have ever imagined. On April 23, 2018, a man intent on causing harm and terrorizing our community drove a rented van up onto the sidewalks of one of our city's busiest streets, ending the lives of 10 people and injuring 16 others.

Like many of my neighbours, this event shook me to my very core. We were scared. We had been attacked in our home, on the streets where we walk every single day. But in our most fearful moments, our community came together. We stood up against those who sought to divide us. Within moments, everyday heroes in my community leapt into action. They delivered first aid. They gave each other shelter and comfort. They reached out to strangers to let them know that they were not alone. This is what makes Willowdale special. This is who Willowdale is.

Despite the differences in where we come from or the language we speak, the religion we practise, our sexual orientation or the way we vote, we love our neighbours. Diversity is our strength.

Our community does have challenges. Over the last two decades, Willowdale has seen unprecedented growth. Once a sleepy bedroom community, our population has exploded. Willowdale has already reached its provincial population growth target for 2041, but past governments at all levels have failed to look forward and invest in the necessary infrastructure to support this growth. This poses serious pressures to our community, especially when it comes to traffic, transit, schools and housing.

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At the southern boundary of my riding, the longest street in Canada, Yonge Street, meets the 401, the busiest highway in North America. Twice a day, cars line up to ramp up onto the highway, backing up Yonge Street for kilometres and holding the surrounding residential neighbourhoods hostage. Residents can't even turn off of their own street. In other areas, commuters race through quiet streets trying to beat the traffic on arterial roads, putting our local children at risk.

Transit is often no better. Willowdale has three subway stops in our riding, yet the system is so over capacity that it's not uncommon for Willowdalers who work downtown to take the subway two stops north to Finch just to get a spot on a southbound train. Meanwhile, up and down the Yonge Street corridor, Willowdale schools are operating at up to 150% capacity. Children who can see their local school from their condo balcony are being bused across town. Willowdale is bursting at the seams.

These will not be easy problems to fix, but there are solutions. We need responsible development in our community: development that's supported by investments in infrastructure, transit and schools.

While I was knocking on doors during my campaign, I met lots of people who were frustrated by the development in Willowdale, people who might be accused—unfairly—of NIMBYism. But these Willowdalers aren't against our community growing. They know how wonderful Willowdale is and why so many people want to move there. What they want is sensible development.

Similarly, my experience in the real estate industry has taught me that savvy developers want the communities where they're investing to succeed. It's in their best interest to build in neighbourhoods with good schools, transit and community.

We cannot rail against the high cost of housing in Toronto and complain about a market that's keeping young families and millennials from buying a home while fighting to stop new housing supply from being built at every turn. Nor can we continue to add pressure upon pressure to local communities without some form of relief.

There can be a win-win.

By supporting our growing communities like Willowdale with innovative, forward-thinking infrastructure solutions, good governance and practical policies, we can

make room for more Willowdalers without destroying the fabric that makes a community like Willowdale so special.

I want to thank the members of my community for giving me the great privilege of being their voice. I will work hard every day to make our home better for us all.

My story, and the story of my family, is a familiar one to many in Willowdale. I am the proud child of immigrants. I owe everything I have today to my parents and the country and the province that gave them refuge.

My father immigrated to Canada from South Korea in 1972. He moved to Guelph, Ontario. He didn't speak a word of English and he did not understand our Canadian culture. But he believed that in Canada if he worked hard he would succeed.

One of his first jobs was hunting for earthworms in the middle of the night and selling them as fishing bait. After a few years, he returned briefly to Korea, where he met my mom and somehow convinced her to come back to Canada with him. To this day, she says that she married him because she wanted to see Niagara Falls.

The two of them worked in a Becker's convenience store and eventually saved up enough money to buy their own franchise. They worked long hours, seven days a week. Forget Kim's Convenience, Madam Speaker; it was Cho's Convenience first.

When I was young I'd sit in the corner of the store and do my homework while my dad studied for his real estate licence behind the counter. I remember listening to customers hurl every racial slur imaginable at my parents, and I remember watching them get robbed at knifepoint. But they never gave up. They only worked harder and harder to give me and my siblings a better life than they had had.

In 1980, my dad got his real estate licence and eventually started his own brokerage. As a child, I remember sitting in the back seat while he signed the deal on the hood of his car. We moved to Willowdale when I was eight. I attended York Mills Collegiate before going on to the University of Toronto. I was a very good student. I had to be; my parents had very high standards. Immigrant parents can be a little bit scary.

After graduating, I worked as an auditor at Mercedes-Benz credit, where I travelled all over Ontario, from Windsor to Kapuskasing, auditing car dealerships. But before long, I found myself back in Willowdale working in the family business. I started as a real estate agent and eventually took over as broker and general manager and, alongside my dad, grew the brokerage to almost 200 agents in four offices across the GTA.

It is the story of my parents that led me to politics. I don't tell them this nearly as often as I should, but I'm really proud of them. I'm also so thankful for their tireless sacrifices that provided me, really, with the opportunities that made me who I am today, thankful for the belief they had in this country and this province.

Like most second-generation Canadians, I grew up with a sense of imposing gratitude and unworthiness, a weight of living up to the standards of the amazing generation that had it much harder than we do, a sense that our lives must

amount to something great to make the sacrifices of our parents worth it. For a long time, I felt a sense of duty to build on the legacy of my parents' generation to ensure that the opportunities they worked so hard to provide for me are attainable for the next generation, for our children and grandchildren—to protect the values that I believe make this province great: that with hard work, you can go from selling earthworms to owning a successful business.

Sadly, these opportunities are disappearing. The dream of owning a home, the possibility of entrepreneurship, and the ability to support a family are becoming harder and harder to attain in our province. We face real challenges and hard choices, but I believe we have a responsibility to build on the successes of our parents and steward our prosperity for our children.

I believe that we can protect our planet and fight climate change without putting people out of work and making it harder for them to make ends meet. I believe we can care for the most vulnerable in our society and deliver world-class education and health care without leaving it to our children to pick up the bill. I believe we can return our province to a balanced budget without cutting jobs. None of this is going to be easy to do, but it is the right thing to do.

On Friday, we heard from the Minister of Finance that Ontario has a \$15-billion deficit. For too many years, the previous government spent money we did not have, and they put it on our children's credit card. Our constituents have entrusted us all to be responsible, to govern responsibly, transparently and pragmatically. It is my belief that we can have no higher priority than this. As parliamentary assistant to the President of the Treasury Board, I look forward to continuing to work with the president, the Minister of Finance and the Premier on the bold, transformative changes we will need to bring fiscal responsibility back to Ontario.

Madam Speaker, in my very first days at Queen's Park, the outgoing Speaker, Dave Levac, said something that really stuck with me. He pointed out that in the history of our province, only around 1,800 people had ever served as MPPs. That is a very small number of citizens who get to represent the voice of our communities. Not a lot of people get to do this.

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In closing, I want to once again thank every single one of my colleagues; my staff; my volunteers; my campaign team in Willowdale; my EA, Ryan Cole, sitting in the members' gallery; my friends; my family; my fiancée and her family; and, in particular, all of my constituents for their passion in our community, their trust, and for giving me this incredible opportunity, this incredible honour to serve my neighbours. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? I recognize the member for Timiskaming—Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House and debate. Today we're debating—
Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: —thank you, Speaker—the amendment to the amendment to the changes to the standing orders.

But before I get into that issue, I would just like to comment on the member from Willowdale. It's a privilege to actually listen to maiden speeches because it's when we get to hear how each other got here and our skills, and how our families helped us and how our parents taught us. It's always an honour, and it's been an honour to sit here and listen. I really appreciate your sharing your thoughts with us. It's one of my favourite things in the Legislature, maiden speeches. Also, the maiden speeches let you go very wide and very broad on the issues. I am sure in a minute or two, or a few seconds, the Speaker is going to give me an evil eye and make me go much less broad.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order. Is that imputing motive?

Laughter.

Mr. John Vanthof: But I appreciate it, Speaker. I've only sat in that chair one time. Someone had to go on a bathroom break, and I sat there for 10 minutes. Ten minutes was enough for me. It's a lot tougher job than many people appreciate. I'd like to thank you and your colleagues who do it because it keeps us civil.

What we're talking about is the amendment to the amendment to the changes to the standing orders. But to debate that, we'll have to talk a little bit about the standing orders and what the standing orders really are, what they mean to the Legislature and what they mean to the people of Ontario, because quite frankly, Speaker, when I got elected in 2011, I had never heard of the standing orders. I had no clue what the standing orders were about. I've been here since 2011, and some days I still have no clue what the standing orders are about. I don't try to hide that. To me, the standing orders are the rule book on which this place works. It's the handbook. If you don't know how something—and they're complicated. They are complicated and they are detailed because they have been developed, in our system, over hundreds of years. We operate in the Westminster parliamentary system, and that system has taken years and years—hundreds of years—to develop.

Now, our standing orders aren't exactly the same as every Parliament, but the principles are. The principles are that members are equal and members should be allowed to debate. Why it's so important and why we're a distance apart is it's much better to debate an issue than physically fight over it, as nations have done over years, and this system is a better way to have reasoned debates about the issues.

The problem we have seen over successive governments—and I've seen it in my few years here—is that government after government sees the Legislature as an obstacle rather than a tool. That, in its essence, is the biggest problem. It shows again in the amendment to the amendment and the original changes to the standing orders.

The way it's designed to work is that the government wins an election. That's fine. That's democracy. That's

part of democracy. But the opposition also wins seats, and the opposition, under a true parliamentary democracy, has the opportunity, not to stop legislation—a majority government has the power to put legislation; they'll get their legislation through—but the opposition should have the power, or should have the tools, to slow certain legislation down to make it better. I don't think anyone in the province is going to think, or is under the assumption, that regardless of party colour, the first draft of legislation is going to be perfect. Humans don't work that way.

The true purpose of the House, of the Legislature, is to take that legislation, and the opposition can use the tools at hand to point out pieces of that legislation that they find problematic. That's our job. That's why I am the agricultural critic. It's my job to do critique on agricultural bills if they come up, or issues. That's my job. In this Legislature it's our job—the opposition's job—to temper legislation. It has been developed over years and years, how this is supposed to work. It's also the job of going to committees.

In a few pieces of legislation, we've had this emergency summer session, and I've been asked several times, "Why doesn't the opposition filibuster? Why don't you hold the government to account until they relent, either on public hearings or something?" Quite frankly, people understand what a filibuster is, and they can picture it. Either they've seen it in a movie or they've seen where someone like me can stand there for hours and hours and hours, and then my colleague can stand there for hours and hours and hours, and slow down the government, to get the government to do something.

An example of a filibuster is—I don't know the exact year, but a former Premier of the Conservative Party, before he was Premier, when he was the leader of the party, had a filibuster, and he introduced bills about zebra mussels in lakes. It took hours and hours and hours. What he forced the government of the day to do—it was our government, at that time—is he forced the government of the day to hold budget hearings outside this Legislature. It's not an unreasonable request. That's how it was done. You could hold the government to account, not simply by adding a couple of hours to a forced schedule, but by having the power to actually stop government.

Every Thursday the House leaders have a meeting. And then it would be the job of the House leaders: "Okay, what are we going to do to stop"—at that time, I believe he was the member from Nipissing, the former Premier, Mike Harris. "What are we going to do to make him sit down? Well, how about we hold hearings outside the Legislature?" And they got that.

That's how the parliamentary system is supposed to work. And yes, it's irritating sometimes for the government side. That's how it's supposed to work.

But successive governments have changed the standing orders to restrict the opposition. I understand that, from the government side, it makes it a lot easier. But from the legislative side, for the purpose of actually making good legislation, you are slowly strangling the House and you're making bad legislation. All stripes of government are

making imperfect and, in some cases, bad legislation, Speaker. That's because we're taking the strength of government—and in this case as well. The government is saying, "We're adding hours of debate"—true. They're adding longer periods for night sessions—true. But they're not adding anything to the ability of the opposition, regardless of colour—because at some point, although the current government thinks that they're going to be a 40-year dynasty, it's not going to happen. A four-year dynasty, perhaps; that's my prediction. But that's up to the electorate. You have to understand that the standing order changes you're implementing, you will also have to live by. That is an issue.

1520

The members who were here before the last election will remember how frustrated they got with time allocation and how frustrating it was. Yet, under the former government, often we had time allocation, which you voted against with us, but most of the time there were committee hearings. Now, so far, all we've seen is time allocation without any committee hearings.

Think to yourself whether or not committee hearings would actually make better legislation. Yes, they would. Deep down, every legislator here knows that, regardless of where you sit. Every legislator knows that the more input you have from the public and the more you have—so my question is, why aren't we doing that?

People tell me, in legends of yore, that—not so long ago—you would introduce a bill, you would debate it in the House, it would pass second reading, naturally, and the bill would actually travel across the province. People from across the province could put their input in, and yes, the opposition parties, regardless of who it was, put their input in. On occasion, the government would actually take some of those opposition critiques and include them in the bill. And guess what? Third reading was almost non-existent in those days, because you had actually hashed a bill out—yes, the opposition, whatever party it was, maybe didn't fully like it, but that's the reason that the government, regardless of party, wins a majority. And third reading was almost non-existent.

On some bills, when the opposition really couldn't stomach it, you would use tactics and you would delay, and then it would go back to the House leaders, and the House leaders: "Okay, so what do we need to get this through?" "Those bills we can agree on; this one, we need an extra week of hearings, or we need something." In the end, you would get better legislation, because that's what we're supposed to be doing here. That's why we have developed this system. I hear a lot of people quoting Winston Churchill. Winston Churchill believed in this system. But it won't work if you just see the House as something that you need to—the government of the day introduces legislation, and we need to be in the House for eight hours or 10 hours and then time allocation and get it out the door.

This is not a production line. We are developing, Speaker, legislation that impacts people's lives. The government of the day is very good—extremely good—at criticizing the previous government.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I just need Hansard to cut it off after “very good.”

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order.

Mr. John Vanthof: That’s part of the problem of our system as well. Instead of having reasoned debates—because I have respect for all the members here. I get along with most of them, almost all of them.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Except for Uncle Ernie.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, I have family here; that’s a problem.

But it’s all sound clips now, Speaker, and it depends where you cut the sound clip off. That is a big problem, because at the end of the day, although politics is about winning and losing, it’s about making the best legislation possible for the people of Ontario, and not simply for the people who voted for the governing party. That’s what the Legislature is supposed to equalize: Give each member a vote, give each member a voice, and allow parties to actually use tools to slow legislation down or, quite frankly, speed up. If the opposition parties had the power to actually slow legislation down, we wouldn’t slow—before, when time allocation and, these changes are made—it’s not that every bill took forever to get through the House. Some bills went through the House much quicker because they weren’t controversial. The government could act much quicker. As a result, you got better legislation.

There’s lots of legislation that we can all agree on, but the way it’s set up now, you’re leaving the opposition with no tools. So we have no choice but to delay as much as we can on everything, because we know we’ve got eight or 10 hours and then it’s shut down.

We’re wasting a huge opportunity here. Democracy, our Westminster parliamentary system, is much more than just who casts a vote in an election—much more. Each time we change the standing orders to benefit the governing party, whoever it is, because all parties have been guilty of it—all parties have been guilty of it—we chip away at our democratic system. Eventually, we’ll have chipped away so far that it’s not going to work. There would be some people who would question whether we’re going there already.

I’m going to give you an example. I’m going to pick on the chief government whip.

Mr. Bill Walker: Oh!

Mr. John Vanthof: I get along very well with the chief government whip.

Hon. Greg Rickford: For now.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, I will after this speech as well.

I think it was the Minister of Northern Development and Mines who said that we get along for now. We will disagree forever, but we usually get along.

During our all-night debate a little while ago, he stated—I’m going to paraphrase here, and he can correct me at some point, if he would like to—that we should work together more. So on these standing orders, we found out about them not even a full day before we were supposed to debate them. Well, in the spirit of working together more for the Legislature, don’t you think that rules that

govern everyone should be given a bit more than 12 hours’ notice and then we’re going to debate?

The reason that we look for reasoned amendments is because those are the only tools we have left. A few Thursdays ago, we did something with the bells that cost the Conservative government of the day one day—one day. And, oh, guess what? The next thing you know, standing order changes to prevent that.

You’re missing the point. The opposition has a role in helping you make better legislation. Believe it or not, I care about you guys. I have family on your side. It’s my role as a member of the official opposition, although we may disagree with your legislation, that we make sure that we make it the best legislation possible. But shutting every door and saying publicly, “Oh, we need to work together more,” then taking standing order changes and throwing them on the House leader’s desk mere hours before they’re introduced into the House and debated—no, no. You’re not working for democracy there. You’re working, the governing party—and we’ve all done it—is working to get their mandate through quicker. You’re losing the whole point about making legislation better.

To the amendment to the amendment: I think we should discuss the amendment to the amendment. I would like to focus in my last minute on the amendment. I think there should be a committee to actually look at this and take a serious look at the standing orders, to see what can be changed to make the system work better. If it was up to me—and I’m not speaking for my party—I’d remove time allocation, and the Legislature would work better. Once we got used to it, it would work better. I know the government’s not going to do that. I’m not sure our government would either next time, four years from now.

1530

But if you really think about it, if you want the Legislature to work, the parting comment I will leave is that we have to look—all of us—at the Legislature as a tool, not as an obstacle. We form a living, breathing lung of democracy, and each time you do something to block some of those cells—your democracy, your system—the voices get weaker. The government’s legislation will go through faster, but each time you remove a check and balance, there’s more risk that at the end of your mandate, you will be looked upon as the previous government, who also made lots of mistakes because they rammed it down people’s throats. You’re doing exactly the same thing: legislation without thought and without criticism. It’s a big problem.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: It’s always a pleasure and an honour to rise in this House and debate important matters like these. I’d like to thank the members from Chatham-Kent–Leamington, Nickel Belt, Hastings–Lennox and Addington, Northumberland–Peterborough South, London North Centre, Willowdale and Timiskaming–Cochrane—and especially the last comment; I really appreciate that. It seems that we need to do a better job, and maybe that’s easier when there’s a few less people in the House, in order

to actually listen and have some time to work together on things.

This government was elected to solve the problems facing the people of Ontario. We were elected to put an end to the fiscal waste of the previous government, to bring jobs to Ontario, and to create an environment where both business and their employees can succeed. In short, we were elected to fix the problems created by the previous government. The people of Ontario expect us to do the work that we were put here to do, and to do it efficiently and effectively.

That's what this motion is about. It's about finding inefficiencies in the way the House operates and correcting those. This will allow more time for debate and for more individual members to be able to debate. Not only will this allow us to get down to accomplishing the work that the people of Ontario have sent us here to accomplish, but it will also allow for a better democratic process in this House.

Speaker, I want to read the standing order amendment motion in its entirety and then address what it's designed to accomplish. It reads as follows:

"That for the duration of the 42nd Parliament the standing orders be amended as follows:

"That standing order 6(b) be amended by deleting the word 'eight' and replacing it with the word 'twelve'; and

"That standing order 35(e) be amended by adding the words 'and one independent member may comment for up to five minutes.'; and

"That standing order 43(a)(v) be amended by adding the words 'or any other day that routine proceedings is scheduled for 1:05 p.m.'; and

"That standing order 43(d) be amended by deleting the word 'Monday' and replacing it with the words 'Monday or any other day that routine proceedings is scheduled for 1:05 p.m.'; and

"That standing order 47(b) be amended by adding the words 'A motion to adjourn the House may not be moved during this debate, except upon unanimous consent of the House.'; and

"That standing order 98(e) be deleted."

The proposed amendments allow for more opinions to be heard, for more arguments to be had and for more reasonable debates. It allows individual members to better relay the voices of their constituents. I don't think anyone can disagree with this. Not only is it allowing for more time for debate, but in doing so, it greatly improves the democratic process in this House. These amendments are not meant to encourage the theatrical politics that have so recently been seen in the House by the loyal members of the opposition, but are meant to encourage independent members of the House to contribute to important debates. Not only do these amendments allow for more reasoned debate in the House, but they also allow for more time to do the important work that we are here to do.

Our government was sent here with a mandate to do the work that needs to be done to get the province back on track, and we are doing just that. This is work that urgently needs to be done. In accordance with that, we plan on

doing that work with an urgency as well. Just as the people of Ontario expect us to do, we plan on working through our legislative agenda efficiently.

These amendments will allow us to pass these important pieces of legislation quickly and effectively while also permitting appropriate debate on them. For instance, we will be increasing the number of allowed night sittings from eight to 12. This gives us the additional time needed to do the work required.

We've introduced changes that could add an additional 40 hours of debate time on government legislation in each session of this Parliament. That's the equivalent of adding almost three weeks of House time without a single dollar increase to the taxpayers of this province. I think that's a good thing.

We're increasing the amount of time that members will have to debate government legislation without changing the ability of opposition members to debate issues that matter to them. That is important. When we were elected, it was not to sit on our hands.

The official opposition's reaction to this, I may presume, will be an unprecedented level of obstruction in this House when it was actually to make sure that the House had more time to debate, not less. It was to ensure that the House considered more questions, and that members on all sides had more time to debate the important pieces of legislation that we will be faced with. That's important. It was to get Ontario out of the hole that the previous government left us in. Pursuant to that goal, we plan on giving ourselves the time needed to do so.

We have already passed many important pieces of legislation, such as the Better Local Government Act and the repeal of cap-and-trade.

We launched a constitutional challenge against the federal carbon tax, which we believe is outside the jurisdiction of the federal government, and which we believe will undermine competitiveness and the productivity of our economy.

We are bringing the people's trust in good governance.

We brought renewed leadership to Hydro One. Without question, we knew that we had to renew the leadership team at Hydro One, bringing in an accountability act that put the ratepayers of this province in the driver's seat. We've done that by passing the Hydro One Accountability Act.

We've invested \$25 million to combat guns and gangs, to deal with the recidivism, the violent crime that has taken place in the city of Toronto and, really, across the GTA in the last several months.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member from Essex on a point of order.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Point of order, Speaker: I believe the member has to speak to the bill, the amendment to the amendment. I don't think he's on that track.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I will remind the member that we've had fulsome debate on the motion itself. This is now the debate for the amendment to

the amendment to the substantive motion. I would encourage him to direct his remarks accordingly.

Mr. Will Bouma: To the best of my ability, Madam Speaker. We know that we have to give the tools to our police forces. However, much more work is needed. Measures such as the additional night sittings, allowing for more debate, among other amendments, give us the opportunity to get more work done more expeditiously and more democratically.

Again, this motion adds 40 hours of debate per session, the equivalent of three weeks of debate. It allows independent members of the Legislature—we have some of them here—an opportunity to respond to ministerial statements. That’s something that, under the previous standing orders, they weren’t able to do.

It gives them a voice, and I hope that they will be supporting this motion because we’ve been hearing that they want to play more of a role in the current composition of the Parliament. But because of the way the standing orders exist, they are very, very limited as to how much they can contribute to the debate here in the Legislature.

What we’re doing here by bringing forward the motion, with the amendments that we see, is allowing the independent members to have an opportunity to react to ministerial statements. We all know that a number of the members over there were ministers prior to the last election. They would bring forward very important pieces of information from their various ministries, and then the other two opposition parties would have an opportunity to react to those ministerial statements. But under these standing orders as they currently exist, because they were reduced to non-party status in the Legislature, their voices have been silenced. What we’re doing is opening the door to allow them to have their voices heard in the Legislature. I think that’s a very, very fair thing.

Under the standing orders as they currently exist, there is very, very limited opportunity for the new member from the Green Party to have a voice. What we’re proposing would allow the member from Guelph, the leader of the Green Party, an opportunity to contribute and provide feedback and his perspective to the statements that come from our various ministers when they present during routine proceedings in the afternoon.

In my opinion, that seems like a very fair accommodation, and I look forward to the member from Guelph supporting this motion because we’re allowing him to speak. Again, I must repeat: We’re allowing him to voice opinions on what our ministers are bringing forward on behalf of the crown.

1540

These measures are important at precisely a time like this. We have just discovered that the previous Liberal government’s fiscal cover-up has actually saddled Ontario with a crippling hidden deficit that today stands at—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Okay. I will remind all members that we do need to keep the debate parliamentary. The member will withdraw.

Mr. Will Bouma: Withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): And again, we are debating the amendment to the amendment, which was put forward by Madame Des Rosiers on page 14, if that helps, of the orders and notices paper.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Just make a reference from time to time.

Mr. Will Bouma: I’m doing my best.

Ontario’s government for the people ran on a mandate to restore accountability and trust for government, and that is what we are determined to do. Not only that, but the former government had left us a number of damaging and distressing policies that had to be addressed or repealed. It is not easy to do all the work that has to be done in a short timeframe. As such, we have found these ways to improve the efficiency of the process that takes place here in the House and have done so at no cost to the taxpayer. That is, these amendments will cost no extra money. They simply find ways to streamline debates and make the House more efficient and more effective. Indeed, that’s what we’re talking about in the amendment to the amendment.

What this government is proposing here is a greater opportunity for the opposition to voice their views to what we are doing. Whether they choose to do this or not is their choice alone. As mentioned earlier in this debate, the opposition may choose to bang their desks and leave without being here to vote against the very legislation that they are opposed to. The opposition may choose to bring in reasoned amendments and not actually debate the legislation. They may choose to sit on their hands. I know the opposition has sat on their hands many, many times in the past, according to my colleagues who have been here for many years.

I know that the previous Liberal government much appreciated having the support of the NDP. According to the voting records, the previous government had the NDP’s support 97% of the time. The NDP propped up the Liberals time and time again, but that was their choice.

Speaker, I want to talk about what occurred in the House of Commons last year with respect to amending standing orders and the government’s plan to adjust how the House of Commons operates. Here’s what the federal government proposed; it reads as follows:

“Proposed changes to the standing orders—the written rules governing the House and its committees—would add:

- “written justification for a prorogation of Parliament;
- “more power for the Speaker to break up voting on omnibus bills—except for budget implementation bills that refer only to budget items;
- “parliamentary secretaries sitting as non-voting members of standing, legislative, and special committees;
- “a new timeline for the estimates process;
- “a restriction on the ability of committee Chairs to limit debate.

“What the motion doesn’t contain is several other ideas floated by the government in a March discussion paper” of last year: “electronic voting, an end to Friday sittings, a formal Prime Minister’s weekly question period, a limit to

the use of motions to delay House proceedings, replacement of time allocation with different mode of managing legislative debate, an end to committee filibusters and other 'obstructionist tactics,' and more committee participation for independent MPs.

"The March proposal immediately drew questions about whether all-party consensus was needed for sweeping changes to the standing orders.

"Changes typically require a decision of the House of Commons, whether by majority vote or unanimous consent.

"According to House of Commons Procedure and Practice:

"Since 1867, there have been occasions when controversial proposals have led to lengthy debates where the government used its majority to amend the standing orders. In many circumstances, however, procedural changes have been the result of a broad consensus among members of all parties and have been readily adopted without debate."

Meanwhile, the opposition "members held a lengthy filibuster (extending into early May) at the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, in protest of a fast-track study of the discussion paper....

"Procedure committee Chair Larry Bagnell adjourned the meeting on May 2, effectively ending the filibuster despite objections....

"The standing orders have changed constantly since 1867; the first amendments came less than a year after Confederation. But many current rules date back to the Lower Canada and Upper Canada assemblies created in the 1790s.... Those rules migrated to the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada, created in 1840, and then to the House of Commons.

"A 1991 privilege ruling by then-Speaker John Fraser upheld the principle that changing the standing orders was allowed through a motion with either unanimous consent or a majority vote of MPs."

We do not support more bureaucracy, as suggested in the amendment. This Legislature has seen many changes to the standing orders over the years. An example of this that is strikingly similar to today's occurred on June 2, 1997, when the government launched a review of the standing orders. It was a private member's initiative spearheaded by the Honourable John Baird, MPP for Nepean at the time. This was in response to a number of the issues that had erupted over the course of the implementation of the Common Sense Revolution.

During question period, the opposition parties hammered the government over the rule changes, which they said were introduced secretly. The Premier of the day, Mike Harris, responded to the criticisms: "In my recent memory of rule changes to deal with, as I think one reporter said, the tomfoolery as opposed to the business of the House, never, I believe, since I've been here, have we had a non-cabinet minister develop, in consultation with backbenchers, a proposal for discussion before anything has been tabled.

"Once again I say to you that we are pleased to listen. We will prepare to meet with you. I think the member for Nepean has offered to meet with both House leaders. I am taking from your reaction that you're not 100% in favour of all the changes, but perhaps when you read through them and reflect on them, if there are some that you feel need to be changed or if you have some of your own, we'd be pleased to listen to those."

The Premier went on to say, "I can tell you that the member for Elgin has already brought forward some proposals just today to the member. We're happy to listen to backbench members as well if the leadership isn't interested in participating."

"The changes made to the standing orders were introduced in the name of efficiency. They were designed to ensure that the government could do its business, which, as we have already seen, is the purpose of Parliament. However, the combative nature of the 1990 and 1995 Parliaments resulted in the accomplishment of less business and major bouts of opposition gamesmanship."

Speaker, the 1997 changes returned Parliament to its original design in allowing the government to complete its agenda efficiently, and that's what we're trying to accomplish with these amendments today. Again, we do not support more bureaucracy. That's listed in the amendment.

Before I wrap up, I just want to reiterate that the people of this province want to save more of their money. They want an economy that is growing, that yields and grows in private sector jobs, that creates opportunities for the next generation. We believe that these changes to the standing orders, without the amendments, may be technical to some, but they actually will enable us to deliver on our word to get more done and to deliver on the commitments that we made to the people of this province, who truly in their hearts want change.

We are delivering that change—positive change—for every single person in this province: change for the taxpayer, who for far too long felt that crippling taxes, user fee increases and skyrocketing hydro have made it very difficult to make ends meet.

I know that's the case in Brantford—Brant—in every region of this province—because we accept the premise that people are working harder and taking home less. So we all have a duty in this Legislature to consider ways to help give people that hope, the opportunity that they long for, and to put more of their hard-earned money back into their pockets.

Madam Speaker, I'm here to say that I'm ready to work for the people of Ontario, and I'm hoping that the opposition is also.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It is my pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents of Windsor West to talk about the motion that is before us.

I just want to touch on where we're at, for the people who haven't been following along, because it can be very confusing. In fact, just yesterday, before I drove back up

here, I was talking to my husband and said that even I wasn't really clear on what it was we were going to be debating today. I needed clarification.

When I said that to my husband, he said, "Well, what is it you're not clear on?" I said, "I'm not clear on if we're actually debating the government's motion, whether we are debating our party's amendment to the government motion, or if we are debating the independent Liberal member's amendment to our amendment on the government motion."

My husband said just to stop, to not even try to explain it to him, because it was so confusing.

I can't help but think that if some of us in this room weren't quite sure where we were going today, as far as what we were debating, and if my husband was getting confused about the fact that you can have a motion and an amendment, and then an amendment on the amendment, and how that adjusts debate, then probably the majority of the people in this province don't really have a good understanding, a good grasp, of what we're doing here. So I think it's important to walk through where we are, and start with the original motion, which was basically to give the government the power to cut off conversation from this side of the House, the opposition side, to give themselves more power to talk as much as they want, to talk about the things that they want and to ram through whatever legislation that they want—because let's be clear, they are a majority government. It's laughable when they say that we propped up the Liberals. The Liberals also had a majority government; they could do what they wanted.

1550

This is what the government side is trying to do, so we brought in a reasoned amendment to that. I think that it was a very respectful amendment for the people of this province. What it said was that we believe that we should have the opportunity, as opposition members, to be able to voice the concerns of anybody who—I know the government side likes to get up and talk about how so many people voted for them and their government so they get to do whatever they want, but that's not factual. There were people who voted for them; there were people who didn't. Clearly, there are people who didn't, or there would be no members in the opposition benches. My constituents didn't vote for the Conservatives; in fact, my vote count went up. That's how much they actually were against what the Conservatives were proposing—not that most people were clear on what the Conservatives were proposing, because they didn't have a plan.

But there are opposition members. And believe it or not, there are people who are Conservatives—card-carrying, long-time Conservatives—who do not agree with many of the things that this government has already begun to do in the very short time that they have been in government. People are shocked to see the change in some of the incumbents who were returned to this House, how quickly they changed once they became government members.

So we brought forward an amendment saying, "No, we don't want you to be cutting off democracy. We don't

want you to be taking away the opposition's opportunity to share the concerns of our constituents." I'll be honest, there have been concerns from some of the government members' constituents. I have a letter from someone in the government House leader's riding who wrote to one of our members because her own MPP, the government House leader, will not respond to her. We are sharing the concerns of not only our constituents but some of the constituents from the ridings that the government side represents.

Our amendment is simply saying that we do not believe that it is right and we do not believe that it is fair to the people of this province for a government to say, "We have a majority government and we can do whatever we want. We don't need to listen to the opposition side. We don't need to listen to anybody in the province, whether they are MPPs or otherwise. We don't need to listen to them if they don't agree with us." So we brought forward our amendment. Again, it's a very reasonable amendment. We're not asking for a lot. What we're asking for is for the people of this province to be heard, to have an opportunity to come to committee. It's interesting, because when the Conservatives were in opposition, they were all about committee and they were all about democracy and that kind of thing, yet everything they've done since they've become government has been without it going to committee, without listening to the people of the province. What has changed since they became government?

After we brought forward an amendment and we started debating that amendment here in the House—at that point, when we brought an amendment forward, that means that the government motion now is put aside while we discuss and debate our amendment. We started that process, and then one of the Liberal independent members got up and brought forward their own amendment. What their amendment is basically saying is that they believe—although they do mention the one Green independent member and they do, in theirs, allot a teeny little bit of time for him, just to make it look good in the amendment. What they're saying is that they believe they should have more time than they are technically, under the rules, supposed to have, not having official party status. So they're asking for more time.

On the surface, that doesn't really look unreasonable, because what they're trying to do is exactly what all of us in opposition are trying to do: to have the voice of our constituents heard; to bring forward the voice of the constituents from the government side, the constituents that they don't want to listen to and are ignoring. I'm not really going to talk too negatively about what it is that the Liberal member brought forward because it seems reasonable that they are saying, "We want an opportunity to have some time to be able to speak and share our concerns, to have questions, or maybe to be part of committees"—that kind of thing.

But I guess the contrast is, Madam Speaker, if you look at it, we have the Conservatives, who, when they were the official opposition, would oppose anything that the majority Liberals would do that would try to shut down

debate, anything that would shorten committee time or abridge committee time. They would sit here and hem and haw and rah, rah, rah at the government for not travelling committees, for only having them here in Toronto, and especially for not having committees at all.

Madam Speaker, Hansard is an interesting thing, and I certainly encourage those on the government side to read Hansard. We've heard a lot, especially today in question period, about how New Democrats "propped up" the Liberals when it came to health care, we "propped them up" when it came to hydro—we "propped them up" on all kinds of things, apparently. But then we're "silent"—at the same time, we're "silent" on health care and we've been "silent" on hydro and we've been "silent" on issues in the education system. I encourage the members on the opposite side to search Hansard. It's really easy to do it. You can search member by member; you can search by topic; you can search by date; you can search by bill. There's a wonderful search tool. You can bring up all kinds of things from Hansard to actually look at someone's record.

Madam Speaker, I'm sure that there are some on the other side who know darn well that we are the only party that has consistently opposed the privatization of our hydro system. The Conservatives started it the last time they were in government, and the Liberals just charged right ahead with that. So it's interesting that those on the government side would now say that we did nothing on the hydro file, that we propped up the Liberals, when we were the only ones, day in and day out, strongly opposing the privatization of hydro.

It's interesting that, really, the ones who are in government now didn't have much to say on health care until it started getting some media.

Anyway, I go back to the fact that we now have two amendments on the floor, amendments to a motion where the government side is trying to stifle debate and take more time for themselves. You have our team—you have the official opposition, New Democrats—who are saying, "That's not reasonable, nor is it fair to the people of this province." The people in this province deserve to be heard.

Then we have the independent member of the Liberals who has brought forward a motion saying, "Well, wait, what about us? We want more time."

We're not asking for more time for ourselves. We're asking, "Let's be reasonable. Let's strike a committee. Let's look at when we are going to change the rules in this place that would make sure that there's someone from every political party that is represented in the House, that sits on the committee. Let's hear from the public what they think about changing the rules." Because, again, Madam Speaker, a lot of people don't understand the rules in this place. I've been here four years and I don't—and I applaud the Clerks' desk, because they've got their work cut out for them in trying to make sure that we all follow the rules when a lot of us don't know all the rules.

Madam Speaker, I talked a bit about what the government was like when they were opposition members and how it was all about, "We want our fair share. There are

rules here, and we want those rules followed. We want to make sure that we get our fair speaking time. We want to make sure the people of this province get their fair share, that they get speaking time." And yet they bring forward a motion that does the exact opposite of what they've always said they stood for. They've brought forward a motion that is basically taking away the opportunity for opposition members to share their concerns. They're taking away the opportunity for the people of this province to bring forward ideas through the opposition MPPs.

The other day, my colleague from Waterloo pulled up Hansard. She used that tool, she used Hansard, and she brought up some things that people on the government side—now ministers, in fact—have said in the past when the government side wanted to change the rules at their own whim, something that we're now seeing—the things that some of the government members had said in opposition when the then-Liberal majority government wanted to use the tools, as we're calling them, of the House. I think they're relevant, Madam Speaker, because what we're talking about is not just a motion brought by the government, but an amendment and then an amendment to that amendment talking about what the rules are in this place and what tools there are for MPPs to try and make sure that the government side is hearing the concerns of the people of the province.

1600

I'm going to start with a quote from the member from Nepean. At the time she was just the member from Nepean–Carleton. Now she is the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. The date was November 14, 2017, not too long ago. She was talking about a closure motion, time allocation, brought forward by the government at the time: "In essence, it is a closure motion which the government is bringing forward so that we will limit the debate on the topic."

The Liberals "would routinely criticize the previous Conservative administration for invoking closure. We would have passages and excerpts from the Liberal government on how they would oppose the invocation of closure. Of course, one of our favourites was the member from St. Catharines, who opposed time allocation and closure motions, until they formed a government, and then they would routinely invoke closure themselves, as they have today."

So, Madam Speaker, that's relative to what we're talking about today. We have someone who was on the opposition side who would oppose what the government was doing, the fact that they were trying to change rules or they were using the tools to their own advantage.

And how far into their mandate are we so far?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Four months.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Four months, and they've done this numerous times.

The same minister, the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, on October 20, 2016, said, "The beauty of talking about a time allocation motion is I'm actually allowed to talk about time allocation. I would really like to talk about matters that are important for the

day, but I find, increasingly in this assembly, we're starting to see this rush just to dump the bill and rubber-stamp it and then move on to something else. I think it's eroding the confidence of this assembly when they do that, and I think it's unfortunate."

Madam Speaker, I agree. I also agree, I would say, that that speaks to what the government has done bringing forward a motion that is trying to limit the voice of the people on the opposition benches. That is why, Madam Speaker, we brought forward an amendment saying we don't think that that is fair or reasonable not only to us, but mainly to our constituents and the other people in this province that want to be heard.

So we have now-government members who once opposed the government of the day from doing exactly what it is that this government is trying to do.

Madam Speaker, again, when you look at—I encourage the members on the government side, if you don't have time or you're not quite sure how to do it, the legislative library is a wonderful thing. They are incredible folks there, so I want to make sure that they get credit where credit is due. The folks that work in the legislative library do an incredible job. They're very thorough and they are non-partisan, so there is no spin on anything that they bring forward, there's no concern there. You simply ask them a question, they will research it for you and they will give you whatever research they can find. It is not politically motivated, it is non-partisan. What you do with it after that is up to you.

I encourage the government members to use Hansard and to use the legislative library when they're talking about changing the rules. Like, for instance, changing the rules mid-election: It might have been good if they had used the legislative library then to find out what kind of trouble they could get themselves in, or what kind of trouble it would cause the people of Toronto.

Had they actually researched Hansard and had some of the facts, they would have seen that we are not unreasonable on this side. Largely, if not always, our arguments are not personal arguments. They are arguments for the people of the province: for our own constituents and for the people of the province at large.

Again, I think that if you look at what the government is trying to do, which is limit the debate, limit the amount of input that we, as MPPs, or the public have, and then you look at our amendment that came out of that, it was to simply say, "Let's stop, take a moment here and look at what you're trying to do." Prior to becoming government, you opposed these kinds of measures, so what now?

Madam Speaker, I'm going to read another excerpt from Hansard. There's quite a few of them here. This is from the member from Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, where he was talking about closure motions. He kept saying, "They've been trying to choke off our democratic right and our constituents' democratic right to speak to these bills, and they've pushed ahead with this bill without proper consultation or listening to the concerns and the suggestions brought forward by the opposition."

He was speaking against the government taking measures that were in the rules. They're allowed under the rules. It doesn't mean it's right and it doesn't mean you should do it all the time, but he was speaking against it. And now he's a member of a government who says, "We don't like the rules the way they stand, because it gives the opposition an opportunity to actually stand up and oppose some of what we're doing, or it gives the opposition an opportunity to get up and give us feedback from their constituents or other people across the province," especially those who have government members who refuse to return their phone calls or their emails and feel they need to come to the opposition to share their concerns.

What they are doing is saying, "We're going to change the rules to suit us." With something that they were actually against doing before, they are now saying, "Well, we're going to make it an actual, legitimate tool. We are going to change the rules so that we can do what it is we want to do, and you people on the other side can't criticize us for it, because they are the rules, and the rules of the House are the rules."

Madam Speaker, I'm going to share one more, because my time is almost up. I'm going to share one more quote from Hansard from a government member talking about how the government needs to be listening to the people; they need to be giving the opposition time to speak, to bring the voices of their constituents. This was May 1, 2018, just before an election. It was the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, the Minister of Transportation. Now, anybody who was here prior to the election understands the guillotine. He liked to talk about the guillotine. In this quote, he says, "The time allocation motion, in so many ways, Speaker, talks about the actions of a democratic institution and an undemocratic government that has turned ... into a dictatorship."

I would urge not only the Minister of Transportation but every single one of you on the government side to think about those words, because the motion you brought forward is going in the exact direction that this now minister had opposed in the past.

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

Ms. Lindsey Park: Thank you to all the members of this government and the official opposition for their important input into this intrinsically democratic motion. Thank you especially to the Honourable Todd Smith for introducing this valuable motion.

I rise to address the amendment to the amendment to the government House leader's motion. Before I talk about the specifics, first of all, let me say that each one of us in this Legislature is elected to uphold the integrity of the democratic system that has brought us here. Parliamentary debate—informed debate, orderly debate that encompasses a wide representation of voices and perspectives—underpins the democratic process we are elected to uphold. The structures in place, including the standing orders which guide the proceedings of this chamber, ensure that this important debate happens.

If this debate does not happen, or if it does not happen in a fair way, we compromise the principles of democracy

we adhere to and swear by. They are the structures that allow us to perform our duties as elected representatives, enabling peace, order and good governance in our province.

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Despite the very short amount of time this government has been in power, there has been an amazing demonstration of the commitment by this government to truly represent the people of Ontario, by getting to work on the bills and motions that are already helping this province get back on its feet. As a lawyer, I have been trained to have a keen and compassionate ear for the voice of my clients. My job was to represent that client in the justice system and to ensure a fair outcome for them.

From the perspective of the judiciary, their job was a bit different, but similar. They are committed to impartial hearings of all the evidence in a matter, whether it falls in favour of my client's case or against it. In fact, it's their legal duty to ensure that all relevant documentary evidence and all relevant voices are heard. For the working of true justice, it's vital that the system, its structures and its procedures ensure fairness, that due process is upheld and that a timely decision is made.

I draw this parallel because what happens here in this Legislature is another expression of the same principles of due process and fairness that you find in our justice system. We're all blessed to be stewards of the legislative process for this amazing province.

Now let me speak more specifically about the details of the amendment to the amendment to the government House leader's motion. The context for this amendment is this—just to remind everyone. I know we kind of get off track sometimes in how we're speaking about things in here, especially when we have such amazing maiden speeches. The government House leader brought a motion that would bring greater effectiveness to the proceedings of this House but, more importantly, ensure that the integrity of the democratic process is upheld. This motion involves six minor procedural changes that essentially would add 40 more hours of debate in the session.

The NDP member from Nickel Belt then brought an amendment essentially saying, "Forget about everything the government House leader said. Let's just strike a committee."

Then came the amendment to the amendment—get ready for it. The Liberal member from Ottawa-Vanier proposed an amendment saying, in typical Liberal fashion, "Forget about everything the government House leader said. Let's strike a committee. And let's not just strike a committee; let's also make a bunch of procedural changes in the interim too."

Look, these are straightforward, practical amendments proposed by the government House leader that would add 40 hours of debate in this session. With respect, we do not need to strike a committee every time the government House leader brings a motion, especially not for these minor procedural changes that are giving all parties more time to speak in the Legislature.

Again, fair and sufficient time for parliamentary debate is what underpins our democratic process. This motion, in

its form presented by the government House leader, will help protect that. All members should support it.

The underlying reasons for putting forward this motion in this session are to ensure flexibility, fairness and debate in the democratic system. This motion is not about the Conservative government trying to change the procedures to dominate the House or to limit debate, as the opposition might try to argue. A careful and impartial look at the changes to the standing orders before the House demonstrates that this motion is reasonable and would benefit every party in the Legislature.

Let me speak about each amendment here. I'll try not to bore you, but I'll try and get into some of the specifics. Let's speak for a moment about the proposed amendment to standing order 6(b), which again the opposition parties, with the amendment to the amendment, would just throw out. This is looking specifically at the last number of days of the fall and spring sessional periods. The current standing order allows for a motion to extend the sitting hours on those last number of days, specifically the last eight days. The motion is simply proposing that that flexibility be extended to the last 12 days of the session, not just the last eight days. This would provide greater opportunity for a substantive debate to happen in the right way. This standing order amendment will allow enough time for the approval and passage of important pieces of legislation, particularly near the end of a sessional period.

This government was elected with a mandate. We need to have the procedural tools to deliver on that mandate in a timely manner. That's democracy. Timeliness is important.

It will give the members on all sides of this House greater certainty that the business they bring before the House, including private members' bills, will be brought to completion within the time frame of the session.

Now, let's look for a second at the second amendment proposed by the government House leader. The government is demonstrating by this second amendment a commitment to have debate heard from all elected voices. In saying this, I especially draw attention to what the amendment to standing order 35(e) says. It would allow more opportunity for independent members to contribute during ministerial statements. It's simple; that's what it's doing. It would include members of the Liberal Party and the member from Guelph, the leader of the Green Party.

If this motion passes, this would be a win for our democratic process and a promotion of the right for all voices—voices that as of today are not allowed to participate in our democracy when ministerial statements are given. It would be a win to ensure that all of these voices are heard in the Legislature regardless of their official party status.

The third and fourth amendments are minor changes to opposition day debates. To be clear, these changes would not impact in any way the amount of debate during opposition days or the number of opposition days that will take place. They will merely give all members an additional two hours to debate government legislation. Again, this is a minor, practical change.

Madam Speaker, the next amendment proposed by the government House leader is an amendment to standing order 47(b). Those are the time allocation motion provisions of the standing orders. That particular amendment is, again, really procedural and administrative in nature. Basically, it brings the time allocation motion provisions into alignment with several other standing orders which already apply to private members' business and to the morning's routine proceedings. Basically, the opposition would still be able to ring the bells if they wanted to, but this move would change it so that any division bells that occurred during a time allocation debate would be just 10 minutes. This would give certainty to the members of the Legislature. When a request is made of them to show up in the Legislature for a vote, they would have certainty that it's not going to get derailed and would allow all members to plan their days better, frankly. This is about fairness, and again it's about ensuring the maximum amount of debate on important legislation put forward by members of the House.

Let's talk briefly about the standing order 98(e) changes. The motivation for this amendment is to stop suspending the House's proceedings in the middle of Thursday afternoons—again, the amendment to the amendment would just kind of wipe this out and strike a committee—as per standing order 98(e), a standing order that envisioned a three-party system, not the official party makeup that we currently have. Having this standing order on the books results in shortened time for debate on important private members' business. The amendment being proposed is merely an administrative amendment that fixes two standing orders that currently contradict each other.

For the members present here today, I repeat that the very tangible outcome of all these amendments is that if the motion is passed in the House, the outcome of the proposed motion would be that, taken together, 40 hours of debate per session would be added. That is significant. That is important. As a Legislative Assembly representing the people of Ontario, let's show honour to those who elected us and make them proud by how we respect and improve the functioning of the proceedings of this chamber.

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Now, Madam Speaker, if you will let me, I would like to conclude my comments by telling a story—just in case people are starting to fall asleep with the details of the standing orders here.

In 1972, around this time of year—actually on September 28 almost 50 years ago—this country experienced a historic moment in hockey history. It's game 8 of the summit series and it's the final deciding game of the series. Team Canada and the USSR, as they were then known, are battling it out. There are just seconds left—34 to be exact—

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Paul Henderson from Lucknow in Huron–Bruce.

Ms. Lindsey Park: —and, suddenly, Paul Henderson who is a constituent of the riding of Huron–Bruce, an

honoured member of the riding of Huron–Bruce, was playing for Team Canada and against all odds scores the winning goal for Canada. With the support of his team and the encouragement of the cheering crowd, he helps win the series for Canada and in the process inspired millions of Canadians across the country.

Now I don't want to directly compare our government with Team Canada, although I'm tempted, but I do share that story to remind us that where there's a will and a strong, unified spirit, there's a way and there's always a win for the people.

This government has the will and resolve to bring forth legislation that will get this province back on track. We've been given the mandate to bring forward this legislation to make Ontario again a province that we can all be proud of, to make sure we're making this province—that we're creating the conditions for businesses to thrive once again.

Let's make the political process more efficient and uphold the spirit of democracy, and let's get down to the business of government, which is introducing, debating and passing good legislation that benefits the whole province and serves the people of Ontario. That is what this government was elected to do, and that is what we will continue to stand for.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: In a way, in this House we all sit at the same table, and when I listen to the government members speak to this bill, it's as if they're eating my lunch. They're telling me how good it is for me to have them do that on my behalf and how very generous of them and how ungrateful of me not to appreciate that and go along with their dictates, but it's like a big brother saying “trust me” as he takes away the house key when I'm on the front porch, closing the door in my face, denying me access to what I used to be entitled to inside the house.

If you wanted me to buy into your proposed changes, you would have consulted me. You would have asked my opinion or listened to what I had to say before you told me what I had to accept, like it or lump it, your way or the highway. We should take the opportunity to have a full and open transparent discussion about rule changes—what works and what doesn't—as opposed to the independent Liberals taking advantage of the occasion to push their personal agenda to regain party status. That may work for them, but it adds absolutely nothing to the debate over proposed changes, limitations and restrictions being imposed by the Conservatives.

Speaker, there's an old saying: “If it ain't broke, don't fix it.” You can add to that, as other politicians have in the past. If it ain't broke, don't fix it—and that's the trouble sometimes with this government: fixing things that aren't broken and not fixing things that are broken. Speaker, if a new government—any new government is frightened by the possibility their agenda could be disrupted by a strong opposition, even if it's just a threat that a strong opposition could dream up ways to throw a questionable government strategy off track momentarily—then after making amendment after amendment, those who develop government

strategy in a corner office late at night might drink their Red Bull, dust off their copy of *The Prince* by Niccolò Machiavelli, and set about chipping away at the rules and regulations that set the standards in this legislative chamber.

Speaker, history is littered with the failed remnants of such tinkering with amendments: those who went too far, just one chip too many, one screw tightened just one turn too many times.

Machiavelli says that when a prince comes to power through luck, he typically has a hard time keeping it thereafter. With luck—such as in sensational bad timing for a foe, or a blip in the way votes are counted—it's never certain whether the new prince has the skill or the strength to stand on his own two feet, or make amendments, so he sets about to tinker with the rules and regulations.

Coincidentally, Machiavelli says one should avoid ruling via magistrates if one wishes to be able to ascend to absolute control quickly and safely.

Yes, that is an interesting historical coincidence, mixing magistrates and politicians into the same soup bowl. However, Machiavelli says it's safer to be feared than loved, as fear is simply a means to an end. But he also warns that fear should never be excessive or reach the point of hatred, which is very possible with amendment after amendment after amendment.

Speaker, in the past, we've seen political actors become dinosaurs as they come and go. Some were orange; some were blue.

I had a dream recently, Speaker—just a dream—and in that dream, the scenery was all mixed up, with modern times and prehistoric times. But in that dream, it seems that recently in this part of the planet, the red dinosaurs walked among us. They foraged in great numbers. They did things they said they would never do, however. Lesser beings warned them they would pay the price for their misguided ways, but when you're big and powerful and have rich and influential friends, over time you grow more and more arrogant in your attitude towards the lesser beings, who grow disappointed in the way you've been running the kingdom.

Then one morning you wake up and get a new sense of what happens when disappointment turns into hatred—absolute hatred. The political ice age descends, the deep freeze surrounds you, and you will be paying the price for your arrogance for some time to come.

Speaker, I'm guessing now, but that weird dream I was having may have been because I was thinking about amendments and recent scandals and bad decisions made by the previous Liberal government. I tell you, it all comes back to bite you at the end of the day, as history has shown us recently. That should sound a note of caution to the government members on the other side.

It's one thing to champion change. But change that establishes new rules for your team, at the expense of the other teams in this tournament, won't sit well with the people who come to this political arena.

For the past 15 years, the Conservatives have used every trick and rule in the book to play havoc with the

Liberal agenda. For example, they took great umbrage, as we've heard, whenever the Liberals used time allocation to push their legislative agenda. There was no end to their parliamentary tactics and their parliamentary theatre. We all recall the now Minister of Transportation, gesturing time and time again as time allocation was voted in, raising his right arm like a guillotine, holding it poised in the air, smashing it down on his desktop with a big whack, and pointing over to the Liberal side and saying, "Time allocation: The guillotine has come down on democratic debate"—very dramatic, Speaker—and making it crystal clear what he thought of the Liberals using the rules to suit their purposes. Now, amendment after amendment after amendment.

Getting back to my recent dream, Speaker, the ice age has struck down the red dinosaurs. The red dinosaurs are outside the safety fence, and the blue dinosaurs have come into the arena. The big blue dinosaurs want to build higher fences and top them off with razor wire. They don't want anyone scaling their fortress, Speaker.

1630

Talk about the pot calling the kettle black. They're now guilty of the very same things they used to rail against when they were over here on this side of the House—not on the rump over here, I mean, but over here, where they used to be.

In the schoolyard, bullies don't last forever. There's always that someone else who comes along. Same as in politics: Bullies don't last. Leaders do; bullies don't. Leaders last if they play fair and they gain trust. Niccolò Machiavelli says that.

The rules that govern us here in the Legislature have evolved slowly, and we have to live by them. I get that; I accept that. The members of my caucus accept the fact that the rules are here. We have to play within the rules. What we don't like is when the other team tries to set the table and turn the table on us. I think it's dangerous for one side in this House to believe that they, and only they, have a legitimate agenda, that only their agenda can be heard in this House. They don't want to be disrupted by somebody asking questions or pointing out the flaws in their argument.

When you have a legitimate agenda, you don't have to change the rules. You don't have to all of a sudden say, "Nah, we don't want to hear from you guys. We're in the right, and you guys aren't. Nothing should be allowed to thwart it in any way, so we want to try and shut you down." That's steamrolling over democracy. That's being a bully, and that's when democracy begins to break down.

The rules have always said the opposition has a legitimate role to play, that the opposition needs to be here to hold the government to account. The opposition needs to be listened to. We are to remain vigilant to ensure that the government makes wise decisions.

Of course, it doesn't always work. Some governments will make decisions that aren't so wise, and they'll do it on a regular basis, as we've already seen in the early days of this government. But the parliamentary system was devised to create a level playing field, a fair playing field,

knowing that over time we switch sides, we change roles and—believe it or not, folks—we change governments. We absolutely do.

By tinkering with the rules for no good reason, the government is sending yet another message—like a small child, a petulant child, with little knowledge, saying something like, “You’re not the boss of me. I’ll do what I want when I want and how I want. There’s little you can do about it, because right now I have the keys to the house, and you’re on the front porch looking in.”

Yes, the government can play Home Alone, but is it the right thing to do, Speaker? I ask you, is it the right thing to do to change the rules for the sake of changing the rules? No other reason; it’s just that, “We’re in power. We’re going to do what we want.” Is it the positive thing to do? I don’t think so. Is it the moral thing to do? Absolutely not.

What happens, Speaker—and I wait for the day when the roles are reversed, as they most certainly will be at some point in the future; we all know that. Nobody lasts forever in politics. Governments come, governments go; the tides come in, the tides go out. We all live by that. That’s been our political history. I mean, look at the red dinosaurs, who ruled this part of the planet for the past 15 years and who now are in the political backwoods, the deep freeze, because of the decisions they made when they were on top of the heap. They’re paying the price, the red dinosaurs, and it’s a steep price to pay. They’re way down at the bottom without a permanent leader, without a sense of direction. They’re still licking their wounds. Their wounds are very deep and possibly fatal, because they did things that weren’t seen to be fair by those who decide our political fates.

Once upon a time, the NDP lost party status.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: No.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Yes. The Liberals were in power, and the Liberals refused—absolutely refused—to help us out. They used to throw it in the faces of the NDP members at the time, reminding them that they lost party status because of the democratic process, that the voters had spoken. And now, through these amendments, through the back door, the Liberals who were tossed out because of their arrogance and because of the way they played the game, if you will, who were kicked out of the tournament altogether, losing their party status—now, through these amendments, through the back door, they’re trying to get back, if not in name, then certainly get all the rights and privileges back through an amendment to an amendment to a proposed change in the rules.

It took a by-election in Hamilton Centre, and our current leader, Ms. Horwath, won that by-election; that’s how we regained our party status. I say to my friends the independent Liberals: Don’t hold your breath about getting party status in this House after the way you treated us the last time we didn’t have party status.

I say to the government members: When you make these changes to the rules and regulations in the standing orders, when the sides reverse and the New Democrats form the next government—and who knows? You may not have party status. But after tinkering with these changes,

don’t come to us and say, “Give us a break,” because you’re not giving anyone over here a break on the proposed changes that you’re making this time. You know that old political axiom, Speaker: What goes around comes around. In politics, that cycle goes around and comes around quite a bit.

It should be a cautionary tale for those who have brought forth these changes to thwart the legislative rules and make it easier for the current government to control the parliamentary agenda. Don’t come crying to the other parties when the ice age descends and the dinosaurs turn blue and you’re left on the outside looking in again—as you were for the past 15 years, don’t forget. Who knows? In politics, a day sometimes can seem like an eternity. Maybe you’ll be on the outside looking in in just another four years or so.

That’s the absolute beauty of politics. We don’t make the decisions on our futures; the voters do. When you turn your back on the voters and you do things like mess around with the Toronto elections halfway through an election campaign, or you make promises during a campaign to bring in a 3% raise and keep the social experiment on a guaranteed income, and then you all of a sudden change your mind, that’s turning your back on promises made during an election campaign—as promises broken when you form the government. People remember. Voters have a long-term memory, and they will remember what you guys have done to a good base of the population. When you say you’re for the people but not for the people on the lowest rung of the ladder—these people vote too, and you will know about that.

When we talk about the rules and the amendments to the rules, remember the voters. Remember the voters who put you here. The very people who put you in can be the very same people who take you out. And some governments last longer than others.

Here’s a quote for you from Craig D. Lounsbrough: “Everything that I hold will eventually be gone. Subsequently, the quality of my life will depend on whether I choose to appreciate those things ‘now’ or wait until ‘then.’” Speaker, it comes down to this: Political life is a series of fleeting moments. I say to the government: Your time will come sooner than you may like, sooner than you may think, and the changes you make today will come back and bite you in the end. Maybe then you’ll finally grasp the significance of what you don’t see as a big deal today but is a big deal to some of the others in the room. It is a big deal to me; it’s a big deal to members of my caucus when you’re saying, “We’re going to change the rules.” You may say, “But we’re going to give you more time,” but you’re taking away from the other time that we’ve already been allocated for those days, be it on Tuesdays for caucus meetings or be it on Wednesdays, when you set up all your meetings with the people who want to come in and talk to you about their priorities.

When you make a change—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Just a reminder for the member: As we still do have some time

on the clock, please direct your remarks to and through the Chair, not to the government directly. Please.

1640

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you. I have been admonished, and I accept that. I deserve to be admonished, Speaker. Any time that I start wandering off, talking to the government directly, please bring me back. Because through you, I recognize the rules. I accept the rules. I accept the order, the rules. I don't want them tinkered with. I don't want the amendments that say—some day, they may come in and say, “Ignore the Speaker.” I don't want to ignore the Speaker.

Speaker, these amendments are not in our best interests as a legislative body. They are not, and I refuse to accept the fact when these government members over there and in the rump over here say, “Oh, no, it's in your best interest. We're actually giving you more time.” They're not making it as fair as it used to be, and that's the point.

I know it's tough for the people at home who look on this as a rule change. People at home, unless they were schooled, mentored and put up with Robert's Rules of Order and other House procedures, are not grasping what's going on. I don't blame them. The member from Windsor West said that a lot of people out there don't grasp when we talk about changes to the rules and amendments to the amendments. And there could be more amendments. Who knows what's going to come yet?

I hope they grasp at some point the significance of what they don't see as a big deal today but that is a big deal to some of us, some of whom have a different vision, some of whom have a different experience in life, and some of whom have a better understanding of the long-term consequences of the decisions that are being proposed.

I say to the government members, through you, Madam Speaker, that in their ignorance—ignorance in the sense that they know not what they do, that they don't grasp what they do to the legislative process. That is the ignorance of which I speak. In their ignorance, when they leave their fingerprints all over these proposed changes, they also leave an open invitation for payback.

Speaker, as you know and as I play with the words written by Stephen Leacock—I'm sorry, Stephen King. Stephen Leacock was the funny guy who gets rattled. Whenever he went into a bank, the tellers rattled him and so on. But Stephen King and Craig D. Lounsbrough: “Payback can be a witch. And when the witch is back, ignorance is not bliss; ignorance is blistering.”

That's what's going to happen. They are setting the stage for a payback. It's going to be big-time payback, because the roles are going to reverse at some point. They're not going to be in power much beyond the next four years, and that's when the rules they make today are going to come back to bite them in the rear. And that will be the end of them.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I would like to begin by thanking my colleagues on the opposite side of this House for their input and debate. At the end of the day, we are all

here because we believe in public service. We believe in giving back to our communities and working hard to make our communities, our province and our country the best they can possibly be.

What sets us apart, however, is the method that we use to achieve that goal. One of the main ideological differences between the NDP, Her Majesty's loyal opposition, and the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, the current government, is that we believe in smaller, leaner and more efficient government.

For 15 years, the Liberals and the NDP have had an opportunity to do it their way. For 15 years, they've increased the size of government, created committee after committee, engaged in unnecessary consultation on issues of no importance, while—let me add—at the same time forgoing consultation on other, more critical issues. But after 15 years, the people of Ontario have had enough. On June 7, the people of Ontario spoke loud and clear when they elected Premier Ford and a majority PC government.

The Liberals and NDP had 15 years to do it their way, and clearly it wasn't working, so now, Madam Speaker, it's time for us to do it our way. After 15 years of stagnation, it's time to finally start moving the province forward. It's time to get Ontario back on track.

We all know very well what the role of Her Majesty's official opposition is, and that is to hold the government to account. Holding the government to account through meaningful and well-thought-out debate and criticism is a fundamental and sacred pillar of our democracy, but there is nothing stopping Her Majesty's official opposition from working with us. I have encouraged, and I continue to encourage, my colleagues across the floor to work with us and to share their ideas.

Working together is a two-way street, however. Whether we are talking about this amendment to the amendment or whether we are talking about a challenge to a bill, we would like Her Majesty's official opposition to work with us. We are receptive to their ideas and we are here to listen. This amendment to the amendment, however, is not going to help us do that. This amendment to the amendment is just adding another layer of unnecessary government bureaucracy, much like what has been happening for these past 15 years.

I invite my colleagues across the floor to look at what we are doing from a different perspective. Instead of just attacking us and criticizing us for the sake of doing so, I challenge them to think critically. I challenge them to put themselves in our shoes and to ask themselves: Why would we propose a change or a bill? What's the reasoning behind it?

Again, this goes back to the fundamental difference between the NDP and the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario. While our end goal is ultimately the same—serving the people of Ontario and making Ontario better for everyone—they believe that this must be done through a bigger, more bloated government, while we believe in smaller, efficient, leaner government that gets the job done.

I've read Hansard. Countless times in this very House, members from all parties have come together and said, "If what you're proposing is a good idea, then let's do it." At the same time, they have said, "If what you're proposing is a bad idea, we will challenge it."

At the end of the day, Madam Speaker, we were elected to fix 15 years of Liberal waste and scandal. We cannot afford to sit around and engage in endless debates. Ontarians simply can't afford it, not when they are paying \$15 billion in interest payments every year due to failed Liberal policies; not when they are paying over a billion dollars a month in interest payments alone to large corporations and banks. Imagine what we could do with an extra billion dollars a month, what impact we could have on the daily lives of Ontarians.

The people of Ontario elected us to help them. They elected us to fix the economy. They elected us to bring responsibility, accountability and trust back to government, and under Premier Ford's leadership we are doing exactly that.

I hope that we can move forward today. I'm hopeful that my colleagues from across the floor will support us in voting against this amendment to the amendment, because once again, it's nothing more than another costly Liberal delay tactic. They are just trying to slow things down. In fact, they haven't given one good reason why their amendment to the amendment is beneficial or will improve the lives of Ontarians.

If we actually look at what this government is proposing to do, I question the logic behind this amendment to the amendment. I don't understand why we would need a standing committee to discuss giving independent members of Parliament an opportunity to speak in the House. Madam Speaker, I am referring to, specifically, standing order 35(e), which says, "Following ministerial statements a representative or representatives of each of the recognized opposition parties in the House may comment for up to a total of five minutes for each party commencing with the official opposition."

1650

The government is here to make sure that every single Ontarian is heard. That is why part of what we are doing to amend the standing orders is to include specific wording that will say not just representatives of each recognized opposition party, but also one independent member. Madam Speaker, that's important because those independent members also represent Ontarians, and those independent members are here to speak on behalf of their constituents.

When we say we're a government for the people, Madam Speaker, we are truly a government for the people—all the people, all of the time. So why do we need a standing committee to debate whether or not Ontarians should be represented in this House? Why do we need to waste time, money and resources to debate on whether or not an independent member should have the right to speak in this House?

We feel that everyone should have the right to speak. I haven't heard a single reason from anyone across the floor

as to why this particular issue should be debated. I challenge them, Madam Speaker, to provide us with a good reason as to why an independent member should not have the right to speak in this House. At the end of the day, when you look at the changes that we are proposing, everything is here to increase responsibility, accountability and trust and restore it back in government.

Another thing that we are looking to do is to delete standing order 98(e). This goes back to our promise to make government more efficient. If you look at standing order 98(e), Madam Speaker, it essentially says that if the allotted two and a half hours for private members' business is not completed, the House needs to be suspended for the unused amount of time.

I can only imagine how many hours and how many millions of dollars in resources have been wasted because instead of moving on after a particular debate, the House needed to be suspended. If there's truly no other person who wants to speak to that particular issue, or if the debate is done, why should we suspend the House? Why can't we just move on? Again, this goes back to being efficient, to being productive, to being proactive and to making sure that when we are sitting in this House we are using our time as efficiently as possible, because every second that we are here is costing time and money.

We have a duty to Ontarians. We have a duty to those taxpayers to make sure that we are being efficient and productive, and that we are respecting their taxpayer dollars by making the best possible use of our time in this House. Again, I cannot fathom why anyone would be opposed to that motion. I cannot understand why. If no one wants to speak to an issue or if the debate is done, why can we not just move on? Why do we have to suspend the House and waste resources?

Madam Speaker, the people of Ontario sent us here on June 7 with a strong mandate: to get the job done. Introducing these changes could add approximately 40 hours of debate time on government legislation in each session of this Parliament. That's the equivalent of adding almost three weeks of House time without any increase in cost to taxpayers. When we're talking about efficiency, this is what we mean. We're also increasing the amount of time that members will have to debate government legislation without changing the ability of opposition members to debate issues that matter to them.

Madam Speaker, this amendment to the amendment does nothing but slow down government. It does nothing but add another unnecessary layer of government. This is what we've seen for 15 years. The people of Ontario have had enough. I encourage my colleagues across the floor to look at this issue from our perspective and to put themselves in our shoes, because this is not a partisan issue. This has nothing to do with ideology. This is simply about being efficient and being productive and about respecting taxpayer dollars. I would hope that my colleagues on the other side of this House can see that and can understand that, and that they can work with us, together, to move forward.

Imagine what we could have been doing if we didn't have to be here debating this motion right now. We could

be focusing on bigger and more important issues. We could be looking at ways to improve the economy. We could be looking at ways to encourage businesses to start back up. We could be looking at ways of improving our health care system. These are the issues that Ontarians elected us—not just our side, Madam Speaker, but everyone in this House. They elected us to represent them and to be their voices on the issues that impact them in their day-to-day lives.

Madam Speaker, no one in Ontario wants more bureaucracy. And I guarantee you, not a single person is going to be upset that we are voting against this amendment to the amendment to add another layer of bureaucracy. However, what they will be upset about is that we are wasting time and resources in this House debating an amendment to an amendment that is just another Liberal tactic to stall and delay.

I've already explained and I've given several examples of amendments that really don't need any debate. We are here because we want to give everyone effective representation and give everyone an opportunity to speak in this House. I'm at a loss for words as to why anyone would be in opposition to this. Again, I invite my colleagues to take a look at the issue from our perspective. I invite them to look at this not from a partisan perspective, not from a political perspective, but from a fundamental procedural perspective.

Let's get Ontario back on track. Let's start focusing on the issues that actually matter to Ontarians. Let's actually debate those substantive issues that can make a strong impact in people's lives, because that's what they expect of their government and that's what they expect of Her Majesty's loyal opposition. They expect Her Majesty's loyal opposition to hold the government to account on those critical and fundamental issues that will actually impact them in their daily lives.

I invite my colleagues and my colleagues across the floor to give one substantive example of a single person in Ontario who is not politically involved—I'm talking about your average, everyday Ontarian who is working hard and just wants to make a living and be successful and raise their family—one person, Madam Speaker, who is in opposition to what we are trying to do.

1700

When I go door to door, Madam Speaker, every single person in Carleton has said to me, "Good job. You tell Premier Ford that he's on the right track." They are happy that we had a special summer sitting. They are happy that we've been here, working hard. And they expect us to work hard. They expect us to be here, to have long nights, maybe even midnight sessions, to work on weekends, because that's what they do. That's what Ontarians do. That's what we should do as well, especially if we want to get the wheels rolling and if we want to end 15 years of Liberal waste and scandal, because the more we dig into this, the more problems we find.

The example I can give is that just this morning, the Premier announced that he is creating a special committee to look at what the Liberals did these past 15 years. That's

an example of a committee that we need, Madam Speaker, because that committee is something that is actually doing something to benefit Ontarians.

We're not against committees. We're just against inefficiencies. We will do anything that we need to do, when it comes to committees and government processes, if there is a positive impact and if it is actually beneficial to Ontarians.

As much as members opposite would like to criticize, again I invite them to look at what we're doing. They can't say, in one breath, that we're doing one thing and then accuse us of not doing it at the same time. This is about being productive, this is about being efficient and this is about getting the job done.

We only have three and a half years left in our mandate to fix 15 years of Liberal waste, and we are going to use every second of it. We are going to use every second to make sure—

Applause.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: We will use every second of it to move our agenda forward, because we owe it to Ontarians. We owe it to them. We owe it to them to fix the mistakes of 15 years of Liberal rule.

Madam Speaker, thank you for your time.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's so good to see you in the chair.

Merci, madame la Présidente. C'est toujours un plaisir de vous voir ici et d'être ici dans notre Chambre pour se tenir debout, pour débiter—pour discuter de nos projets de loi aujourd'hui.

Today we have something in front of us. It's an amendment to an amendment. It's one of the first that I've seen in this House: an amendment to an amendment. We are charting some new territory in this House.

I will inform my colleagues, through you, Speaker, that this is our 26th day in this chamber. Twenty-six days we've sat. I know it feels like an eternity; it feels like a long time. Sometimes it has gone well into the night, and that has been through the volition of the government. They have an absolute right to determine the terms of this House and the arrangements to which we sit and debate law, and that is what they're doing today.

They are proposing changes to this book. Is this a prop?

Interjection: No.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It can't be, because it is an order of the House. It is our standing orders.

For the sake of those who are tuning in tonight on the legislative channel, this book, the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, is essentially the rules of the game. These are the rules of engagement. This is our playbook, similar or akin to any other rules that you would ever have to follow: the laws of the land, the rules of any sport. They determine what can and cannot be done in this House. By and large, they are fair and they are well

nuanced, and they have been crafted over, literally, the time that this House has been in existence.

We can debate the merit and we can debate the functionality of these rules, but they are what they are, Speaker. In the 26 days that we've sat here, we have been governed by those rules. Previous to this sitting of the Legislature, we were governed by those rules, albeit by another government, the Liberal government, and I would argue that they got quite a lot of stuff done in their tenure, their 15 years. Sometimes we held them up; sometimes we used the tools that are in the standing orders to put a pause to some of the legislation, as we are mandated to do. That's our job here, at least on this side. It used to be the job of the now-members of the government, but they have conveniently forgotten the role of opposition. I don't blame them; you're in government now. That's okay.

But I think they do remember and will remember that one of the things that we learn as new members, as nascent members of this Legislature, when we first walk in is that at the precipice of those crests there is an eagle, and at this one here there is an owl. It's one of the first things they teach you when you come in here, in MPP 101 class. It is that, as members of the government, that owl is to remind you to remain wise. Did you learn that one? Did you get that? Yes. And this one, the eagle, is to remind us as members of the opposition to remain vigilant in our defence and our criticism of the laws that are proposed. I take that seriously—in fact, so seriously, Speaker, that when I bring people into this chamber for tours, I point that out, because there can't be any more poignant a reference as to what the job is for us all in this House. I mention that only to showcase that there are references and little touchstones all around this building to remind us of what our job is and how to do it. And this book is the gospel on how to do it.

What the government is proposing now is pretty clear for those who understand this book and who know its reference: It's to consolidate power and control of this House. They can wax eloquently about how they're expanding time, but anyone who understands how the order of this House works understands that they are actually minimizing the time in which they can be scrutinized and minimizing the time in which we can give them pause.

Speaker, I would argue that the government today, in their 26-day tenure, should be thanking us as members of the opposition, should thank us for their most recent attempt to circumvent the rules of this House by invoking the “notwithstanding” clause. It was because New Democrats stood to fight that measure that we held up their usage of that clause so that the courts could review it. And guess what? They ultimately were able to pull that clause off the table, thereby saving them, I would submit, an embarrassment in perpetuity. That has never been used in this House. We've never had to invoke the “notwithstanding” clause, not the least for something so minor in its importance as the construct of a municipality.

It's minor to the members of the Toronto council, but certainly when you put it in reference to the use of the

“notwithstanding” clause in other jurisdictions, it certainly doesn't fit the role. In fact, Speaker, what we know about the use of the “notwithstanding” clause and the rules of the standing orders is that good governance requires us to propose legislation that would avoid us, in every sense, having to circumvent the rules of this book. We should always have these rules in mind, or be mindful of them. We should be crafting legislation to avoid ever using the “notwithstanding” clause. But, Speaker, this is a government that has stated that it will craft legislation and invoke those clauses whenever it seems and deems fit. That is not governance, and that doesn't embed trust in the people who sent us here.

Speaker, it is this proposed legislation and the amendment to the amendment that we are ultimately debating, but the actual proposed legislation is, I believe, based in fear. It's interesting because, by all accounts, every time the Premier rises in question period or at a hot dog rally in his backyard, he will proclaim that his government has done so much in so little time. They've done so much; 26 days and you should see how fast they've acted.

Applause.

1710

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, give yourselves a round of applause.

Speaker, you can now—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order. The government House leader, come to order.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Somewhere in Ontario, I believe in the member for Prince Edward–Hastings's riding, you can get a terrible beer for a dollar. One can of beer you can get for a dollar, Speaker. Somewhere in Ontario they've achieved that high-water mark. It's amazing.

You know what else they've achieved? They've achieved more lawsuits in 26 days than any other government in the history of this province.

Speaker, here's something else—

Interjection: He's leaving now.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I wish people wouldn't leave, Speaker. I wish they'd stick around for some more of the highlights of this government's 26-day tenure.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): A reminder to all members that we don't comment on other members' attendance or lack of attendance.

You may continue.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, the highlights, the high-water marks of this government: legal challenges from students, from Tesla, from—

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Low-income.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: From people who are on low income. They are challenged in courts now to the tune certainly of millions of dollars in legal costs that the taxpayers will bear.

Speaker, they have achieved so much in their tenure, it's a wonder they want to get into the mess, into the weeds, even faster. So I would counsel especially the rookie, neophyte members who have never actually had

the opportunity to sit in this House for a long amount of time—you're new and you are in government, and that's great. It's a shiny new thing and you're all excited. I understand. You're going to toe the line. I get it; we've seen this before. We saw it for 15 years.

But imagine if the previous Liberal government which you bemoan so much had the fast-track ability which you see today. Imagine how much more damage they would have done. That's the precedent you're setting now, and to think that your level of arrogance could be—through you, Speaker—so high that you don't believe you will make any mistake in legislation will condemn you to the same fate as that government. There is no doubt about it. We know this. We've seen this before, Speaker, and it doesn't end well for them. We know that.

I'll reference back to some of the history previous to this government where members who are now ministers played a large role in stopping, in blocking, some of the Liberal government's legislation. They'll talk on how the New Democratic Party, at some time throughout those 15 years or whatever, supported the government 54% of the time. Speaker, yes, I will get to the point of the bill, the amendment to the amendment. Well, the PC Party supported the Liberal government 54% of the time as well and now, today, they ask us to support their initial legislation, the changes to the standing orders, as I circle back to why we're all here talking. You would like us to support this measure, would you not? Don't you want us to support that?

Mr. David Piccini: Hear, hear.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You would. You'd stand up and you would applaud. But yet, as a member of the opposition, if we were to do that, at some point in the future you may try to embarrass us, or the Liberal Party might try to embarrass us, by actually stating that we, at some point, supported you. That's the way this place should work.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Propped you up.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: We propped you up.

Speaker, it's ridiculous. Their argument is ridiculous. It does nothing to make this House more functional. It does nothing to support the rules of democracy, and I think those members of the Progressive Conservative Party, the government, who are wise and who have seen this play understand that this isn't the way that it should go down.

One of the other achievements of this government has been that they've set a low bar in public opinion in one of the fastest amount of days since—it took three years for the Wynne government to reach a 26% approval rating; they've done it in three months. Speaker, that's something—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's perfectly good for debate.

Mr. David Piccini: Point of order.

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

Mr. David Piccini: The member is in no way addressing the sub-amendment, Speaker, which addresses the actions of the government under standing order 47.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I appreciate the point of order.

I will remind the member from Essex that we are debating the amendment to the amendment to the substantive motion, and I would ask him to find his way there, please.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Speaker. I actually do appreciate the intervention of the member from Northumberland-Quinte West—

Mr. David Piccini: Northumberland-Peterborough South.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Peterborough South. I apologize; Northumberland-Peterborough South—he gave me the opportunity to wet my whistle with a glass of water. And guess what, Speaker? It is well within the rules of the standing orders for him to do that. God forbid they change that. Imagine, where a member couldn't rise and proclaim his dissatisfaction with the tenor of the debate. But that's the slippery slope that we have entered into.

Now, New Democrats have proposed an amendment to their bill: for us to actually study the standing orders, to look at precedent. As we are in a Westminster parliamentary system, there are other jurisdictions around the world that are required to follow these rules and to adhere to them and to debate through them. We can learn from them. We can learn from experts in the standing orders. I don't profess to be one, but I certainly know that they exist and I would like to hear from them. I would like to hear about how these rules that are proposed through the government, and from the members of the independent party, actually will affect this Legislature and this body, not only for the short term but certainly for years to come; because we know how detrimental it can be if we degrade the ability for all members of this House to voice their opinions, to utilize measures to raise awareness and, potentially sometimes, to put a pause on legislation to allow members of civil society to understand the ramifications.

I've seen bills, and members of this House have seen bills, tied to a rocket ship and flown through this place. We've seen it with time allocation. It's one of the most highly used measures that the previous government embarked on. There are multiple counts and examples where the previous official opposition, who are now members of the government and in some cases ministers, absolutely decried the use of time allocation, of cutting off legislative debate and stymying the democratic process, which we believed was happening.

The member who is now the Minister of Transportation: We know the infamous guillotine, the "guillotine approach." It was funny, but it was only funny because he used it so many times. Now the Minister of Transportation is in a position of power, and he is complicit in supporting his government in consolidating that power. I believe that at the end of the day he's going to regret doing that, because at some point, you're not always going to be the government. It's just the simple fact. At some point, another party and another construct is going to make up the government.

The PCs might be in government for the next 20 years, God forbid, but you might not be a member. Believe me, I could never be a member of the PCs. I like sleeping well

at night; I could never join the ranks of your caucus. But I just want to caution them that they're setting a tone, they're setting a precedent here from which they won't really be able to back down.

"Audi alteram partem" is right—where is it? It's at the far end. It's inscribed in the hallowed halls of this chamber, in the wonderful woodwork that adorns this chamber. What it means is, "Hear the other side." I guess, in the three minutes that I have left, that that's a question that I have for this government: What are you afraid of? Why so sensitive? This is supposed to be a big, tough, strong government for the people, but they've seemed so fearful, timid, sensitive and fragile to any criticism. They've tried to cut off debate already. We have yet to see any movement toward committee work.

I listened intently to the previous speaker, my colleague the member from Carleton, who said, "Why do we even need a committee?" Could you imagine, "Why do we even need a committee?" Is that the next step? Are we going to disband all committees and do everything by decree here? Is it rule by Ford? Have you lost your way? Where is the gumption that I used to see from the previous members of the opposition?

1720

Speaker, all I see now—and they understand, especially those members who have been here for a while and seen successive governments. I see it in their eyes, as a member who has been here for eight years. I see consternation. I can tell. I can see it in your eyes.

Interjection: Constipation?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Not constipation, but it looks similar.

When we look across the way and we see consternation—it's a big word, Speaker, but it means "anxiety" and it means that you're really not too certain about the direction of this, because you understand the ramifications.

As we've heard so many times, there's a new sheriff in town, and I don't see anyone on that side giving any critical commentary or anyone standing up to say, "You may want to think twice about this, because this is going to harm the very institution which we profess to work for and honour." I don't think that that's happening.

I want to end with a quote from an individual who was named the Greatest Canadian several years ago. His name was Tommy Douglas. He was the leader of the CCF as a provincial Premier and also a federal member of Parliament and federal leader of the NDP. His quote is: "Fascism begins the moment a ruling class, fearing the people may use their political democracy to gain economic democracy, begins to destroy political democracy in order to retain its power of exploitation and special privilege." That was wise counsel from Tommy Douglas. It is something that was as true then as it is today. Members of the government would be wise to heed that quote and to reflect on the very serious effects that this proposed legislation will have.

I thank you very much for your time, Speaker.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's a pleasure to stand in this House and offer a few words to this debate.

It's interesting. I've been sitting here for—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: A long time.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: —a long time, listening to quite a few different opinions from the opposition and certainly, from our side of the House—different points on why or why this shouldn't be passed.

We're debating the amendment to the amendment, which is quite interesting. I remember, in our Lions Club, we used to get into this a little bit when we were trying to pass motions in our monthly meetings. Nobody could understand that—least of all me. We used to get into some arguments quite a bit of the time: "What's an amendment to an amendment? Which one do you vote on first?" We used to go back and forth and never get anything done, which is exactly what's going on here today.

I do want to speak about this government order. I want to quote Mr. Smith here, our member from Bay of Quinte. It reads this way: "That for the duration of the 42nd Parliament the standing orders be amended as follows:

"That standing order 6(b) be amended by deleting the word 'eight' and replacing it with the word 'twelve'; and

"That standing order 35(e) be amended by adding the words 'and one independent member may comment for up to five minutes.'"—seems fair to me; "and

"That standing order 43(a)(v) be amended by adding the words 'or any other day that routine proceedings is scheduled for 1:05 p.m.'; and

"That standing order 43(d) be amended by deleting the word 'Monday' and replacing it with the words 'Monday or any other day that routine proceedings is scheduled for 1:05 p.m.'; and"

Mr. Toby Barrett: Everybody got that?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I think they're getting it.

"That standing order 47(b) be amended by adding the words 'A motion to adjourn the House may not be moved during this debate, except upon unanimous consent of the House.'; and

"That standing order 98(e) be deleted."

Then the member from Nickel Belt gets involved.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good member, a hard-working member.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I would agree to that.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: She is actually a very good—

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I would agree to that.

That the motion be amended:

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

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

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

I'm going to get to the amendment to the amendment soon.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Pretty clear so far.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Pardon me?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Clear as mud so far.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Clear, yes. Here we go:

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

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

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

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

Then the member from Ottawa–Vanier gets involved, and she proposes the amendment to the amendment. This is her amendment:

“That the amendment to the amendment be amended by adding at the end:

“That pending the work of the select committee on modernizing the standing orders...”

Speaker, I want to talk about this, but I want to relate it a little bit to my background and how decisions can be made or should be made. I, like the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, come from an agricultural background. I milk cows. The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane milked cows for quite a period of his life. We did farming work. We planted crops, we harvested crops and whatever else. I don't know whether he raised hogs in his farming career, but I did. But there were decisions to be made all the time in business, and certainly a farm is a big business. To sit and to have to make a major decision, and then to have to set up a committee to do all this stuff, and then to have to set up another committee to do this stuff and amend this and amend that, you'd never get anything done.

I took the opportunity yesterday—it was a beautiful day in Perth–Wellington, and a neighbour of ours, a friend of ours, was combining beans. He asked me to come along for a ride. I had never been in this large of a combine in my life. It would take 40-foot swaths. He would turn it around into the beans, and then the GPS would take over and it would guide the combine down the field, so that he was taking a certain amount of crop, and when he was done, he had a certain amount of crop left. It was just incredible how this combine worked.

But in that time that he's in the combine, he's also talking to another combine in the field, and also to the grain buggy that was taking the crop away from the combines, delivering it over to the trucks. He had three trucks running. Just for your information, Speaker—this impressed me; I'm sure it will impress you—he started at noon yesterday afternoon, and by 5:30 that night, he and the two combines had 300 acres done. That's just absolutely amazing and incredible.

But he is the decision-maker there. He's telling this combine to do this, to take this over here and take the grain buggy here. He's coordinating the trucks, and all the time he's running a million-dollar combine up and down the field. He's not running by committees; he's making those decisions.

1730

I think our government was elected to do that very thing. We were elected with a very good majority by the people of Ontario. We were elected to make decisions. If a government is in power, if a government has a majority and can't make a decision, why should they be there? They shouldn't be there. That's what our leader has asked us to do. He has asked us to make decisions for the good of the province.

We believe this bill that we're talking about right here is very good for the province of Ontario. It does not need the amendments. It does not need the amendments to the amendments. It's okay by itself.

I believe it will speed up the process—it's fair to the opposition members and certainly to others—and we can get on with the business of Ontario.

One of the things that the farmer I was riding with said to me was, “What do you not like most about your position as an MPP?” I said, “The slowness of getting things done.”

Speaker, I know that when you look at what you're doing—the business of the House—you have to be careful. You have to be considerate of what you're doing and try to not make these mistakes.

But life goes on. You have to make these decisions. I believe the people of Ontario gave us a mandate to make these decisions. Speaker, I believe the bill, as proposed by the member from Bay of Quinte, will do that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? I recognize the member from Timmins.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: For the third time.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): For the first time on the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To the subamendment. I do realize that, Madam Speaker.

I wanted to get back into this debate with the subamendment, because I think there are a couple of points that need to be made here.

You will know that the subamendment is actually trying to amend our amendment to this particular motion.

What the government is trying to do by the main motion, and what the Liberal Party is trying to do by their subamendment, is to change the standing orders to their own liking. On the one hand, the government gets to change a standing order so that they can move stuff through this House quicker and more efficiently, from their point of view. Then the Liberals are trying to do what they're doing in order to be able to get standing in the House. But both are essentially about the same, in that they're trying to change standing orders from the perspective of what's good for them.

I understand that. I've been around here long enough to know that each political party tries to do what they can in order to be able to advance whatever it is in their agenda.

But it just seems to me, and I think it seems to a lot of people out there, especially with what's going on today with this current government—we saw the attempted use of the “notwithstanding” clause; we saw the change to legislation under Bill 5 that essentially creates a different structure of council, something normally done by the municipalities themselves—that what's really bad here and what's happening is, we're forgetting that this Legislature is about people.

If we're going to change standing orders—there might be good arguments for why you need to change the standing orders. There may be things that the government wants or maybe stuff that the Liberal opposition and Green Party want. There may be stuff that we want. But it should be, really, about how to make this place work better, so that the people at home look at this Legislature and have confidence in what we're doing and say, “You know what? They're actually trying to work together to do what's best for us.”

Instead, what we've got is two political parties who, by way of their motions—the government and, in this case, the Liberals—are trying to do what's better for them.

We, as New Democrats—I'm not saying we're perfect. Come on; let's get real here. We're all political parties. We're all trying to advance our own agendas. I understand that.

But the attempt, by way of our amendment, to the main motion is to say, “A pox on both your houses.” We would be better off to refer this thing to a select committee—if you want to send it to a standing committee, that's fine by me too—so that the committee then looks at what the current standing orders are and what changes should be made.

For example, one of the recommended changes that the government brings forward is the issue of what you do in private members' hour, should you only have two main parties in the Legislature, as we do now. We now only have two official parties. It means to say that the Liberals have less time of debate, which creates a 31- or 33-minute pause at the end of private members' to get us to the point of being able to vote on a motion. Fair enough. That's a fair debate. I think that's something that we have to look at. But we would be better doing that by way of a select committee as we propose in our amendment, so that we can look at all of the issues. Because my concern about the standing orders is that over the years the standing orders have changed so much in the favour of government that we've forgotten what the Legislature is all about.

Now, I know my good friends the government House leader and the whip from the government and also, I think, the deputy House leader like to quote Churchill. I've heard them in their speeches talk about Winston Churchill, one of the greatest parliamentarians that probably ever lived. You might argue there are a few others. For example, I was thinking of people like Asquith—not Asquith, but what was his name, the Prime Minister during the First World War in Britain? Somebody help me out here. My mind just went blank with the name. He was called the

Welsh Wizard—I can't remember his name—he did a lot of changes.

The point is, those Prime Ministers and those members of the House in all parliaments across the Commonwealth were working with standing orders that allowed individual members the ability to sometimes say no to their own parties and to be able to force the House, or the Legislature, to do what's right. In the case of Winston Churchill, both as a Conservative and later as a Liberal and again as a Conservative—because he's the only guy who switched parties twice in his parliamentary career—he utilized the rules of the House in order to be able to push issues that were important to him.

For example, when he was a Conservative early on, there was the whole issue of free trade that was being debated in Great Britain in the Parliament of Westminster. He took a position that was different than his own party. As a result of taking that position, he did what he had to do in order to be able to push the then-Conservative government to a different position. At the end, isn't that what this place is all about? Isn't the Legislature about individual members—not just parties, but individual members—being able to have an influence on what happens within—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I got the name. I'm so glad I've got great research assistants. How come I can't read his name? No, it wasn't Asquith. It was the Welsh Wizard. How can I forget his name? That's so bad.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Who was the guy? David Lloyd George?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Lloyd George. Thank you very much.

Mr. John Vanthof: I remember Boy George, but—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Not Boy George, but Lloyd George. That's funny.

My point is, with Lloyd George and with Winston Churchill, they understood that individual members of the House have to have an ability to hold their own parties to account and to hold the Legislature or the House to account.

That's what this place is all about. We get voted in by individual voters in our ridings—our constituents—to come here and to try to do the best job that we can. More times than not, Madam Speaker, we agree with our parties. Why? Because we bring forward motions and pieces of legislation that are within the context of what it is to be a member of that party.

The Conservatives: I do believe that a lot of the legislation they bring forward is legislation that Tories could agree with. It would be the same thing if we New Democrats were in government. We would be moving legislation that falls along the lines of what most New Democrats would support. Therefore, most New Democrats, as most Conservatives, would vote along parties.

But every now and then comes a time where a member has a real difference of opinion when it comes to a particular issue. What we're doing here by changing the standing orders bit by bit—because this has been going on

since the better part of 25 years in this House. I've been here for about 28, and for at least 25 years there have been changes to the standing orders.

We have consolidated the power into the Office of the Premier. I think that's a real problem. If you were the government House leader, you would hope that your members are listened to and that you can come to some sort of conclusion and agreement on what has to be done in the House. Instead, what we've done is we've changed the standing orders to the point that we've essentially made the Premier of the day a king or a queen, depending on if it's a male or a female that occupies that chair.

You know, you've got to remember that the House of Commons, back at the time of the Glorious Revolution, which would have been the late 1600s, early 1700s, decided that you had to put limits on the crown. The idea of that was that we had absolute monarchs who did some really bad things—Henry VIII, Charles I—who did things that, quite frankly, were not in keeping with what was better for their nation.

So the House of Commons—it's a bit of a convoluted story, but what eventually happened is that there was what they call the Glorious Revolution where King William III, a Dutchman who was—

Mr. John Vanthof: Two thumbs up.

1740

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I don't want to sit next to this guy anymore; he makes me laugh all the time.

But the point is, the British actually invited a Dutch prince to come and take over the monarchy because they didn't want a Catholic succeeding in the name of the son of the then King of England—and the son was a Catholic. So they had William come over, and he was one of the few conquerors who conquered England by invitation. That's essentially what happened.

Mr. John Vanthof: He didn't leave.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And he never left after.

But the point is, the commons at that point made a decision, and the decision was that they would wrest some of the power from the King's hands—or the Queen's hands, because Queen Anne was there at the time and so was Queen Mary—and Parliament slowly started to take on an authority: that the House of Commons—in our case the Legislature—is the place where decisions are made.

This is very related to our standing orders, because standing orders are about how the House works. What has happened is that we have come full circle. We have weakened the standing orders in this Legislature to such an extent that the Premier, he or she, gets to make all the calls, and members, especially members on the government side, are powerless to do anything about it.

You see it in this place, where we have debates on legislation—I'm not going to go through the debate we just had last week when we sat here at midnight, but it happens on multiple pieces of legislation, where government members say, "Listen, I've got a problem with what you're doing because it's going to affect my constituency in a negative way." For example, what about those

members who are losing natural gas projects in their communities where we were supposed to expand the natural gas system to rural areas and places where there was no service? I'm sure the rural members on the Conservative side of the House, because I'm affected and I know my good friend from Timiskaming-Cochrane is affected—probably not yourself. They have no ability to get up and to oppose.

This whole idea of the need for individual members to be able to have some ability to hold the government to account has to be somehow re-enacted or put back in place, because now what we've got is a Premier—I don't mean this particular Premier—we have a system where a Premier decides what it is that's going to happen, and everybody has got to follow the line. I have more freedom in the opposition than the government has on their side of the bench. At least I can get up and advocate for my constituents. Often, we're able to make changes when it comes to what happens in the bureaucracy, and sometimes by talking to ministers we can get some changes done too. But try to move the government off a major decision—unless we have some way of changing the rules or allowing that to happen in some way so that the government has to take a step back and look at what happens, we're just going to continue to erode the rights of individual members. But more importantly, we're going to continue to erode the effect that legislation has on the public and the confidence that the public has in our House.

Let me just give you a really simple example. If we had standing orders that were more in line with what they were when I first came here—I was elected on September 6, 1990. When I got to this House, a member could stand up and debate and could hold the House in debate as long as he or she wanted. If the House started at 3—back then, we used to start at a different time—once we got to orders of the day, if an individual member had an issue he or she was trying to make some ground on, the member could take the floor and not cede it. It happened very rarely. Very rarely would members utilize that particular right that they had as individual members, but it did happen. It happened on the government benches, as well as it happened on the opposition benches. There were times when government members got up, took the floor and wouldn't cede it, because they were trying to make a point with their own government in order to amend some piece of legislation more in keeping with what their constituency wanted. And it also happened on the opposition side.

I remember my good friend Peter Kormos. Pete took the floor and didn't cede it on auto insurance. That was not necessarily a bad thing. That resulted in some changes to what the government was trying to do with their auto insurance bill.

When I first came to this House, there was no such thing as time allocation. If the government wanted to force the vote on something, they could call the question—that the question now be put—which is like a way of stopping the debate. But it was up to the Speaker to decide: Has there been enough debate, and is there anything new being said that has not been said in order to allow the debate to go

forward? So the threshold for ending the debate was much higher then than it is today.

I remember as a member of the government, back in the 1990s, that we tried to call the question a couple of times on bills that we were trying to get through the House because we couldn't come to an agreement with the opposition—the Conservatives under Mike Harris and the Liberals under Lyn McLeod. We tried to call the question. The result was that the Speaker didn't give us the question because the Speaker—and the Speaker was a New Democrat, Mr. Warner—said, “No, I am still hearing some new things. I don't think enough has been said. I'm continuing the debate.” That forced us as the government to go out and to make an agreement with the opposition on how to proceed on a particular bill.

Is that a bad thing? Because, in the end, the opposition can't stop the government from passing a bill. We all understand in this Legislature that the government has the sole right to propose what to call on the order paper. We can propose from the opposition, but it's only the government that can call a debate when it comes to what is done in orders of the day. Yes, we get our private members' bills and we get opposition days, but when it comes to government legislation only the government can control what is called during orders of the day.

In the end, the government has to be able to get its way, and I say that openly as an opposition member. I've sat in government, I've sat without status, I've sat as a third-party member and now I sit as an official opposition member. I fully understand that the government has to be able to get its way. But the quid pro quo is that the opposition also has a role to play and that is to say, “Should a bill go to committee? Should there be public hearings? Should there be an ability to amend the bill from what the government originally proposed?” The answer to all those questions is yes.

Tell me why and how the government benefits by not allowing that to happen. At this point, we're so used to working with time allocation and having limits on debates and rules that very much constrict the ability of the opposition to put pressure on the government to force committee hearings—the government hasn't seen what a committee hearing is.

When I first got elected, we normally introduced a bill in, let's say, the fall session. Most bills went to committee in the intersession and came back in the spring session for third reading. Very seldom would a bill pass second and third readings in the same session. That's normally the way it worked around here, and that wasn't necessarily a bad thing. There were some bills that did because there were some bills that the government and opposition could agree on—it's a matter of just getting things done—but on contentious bills, that's the way it went.

But I'll tell you what happened in the process. When the public was allowed to come before our committees and to depute at committee not only here in Toronto but across the province—because we used to travel our bills—it meant that everybody had to listen. The government and the opposition members had to listen and we had to amend

the legislation where it made sense to amend the legislation, and we made better legislation.

The proof of that is that with a lot of the laws, a lot of the statutes that we passed back in the days prior to time allocation, we have not seen the type of regulatory changes that we're seeing today—well, that's a whole other debate in regard to the delegation of authority from the House to the cabinet. But what I'll tell you is that the bills have stood the test of time.

I think, in my time here, when I first got to the Legislature, most of the legislation that was then passed is still the same legislation on the books, where the main intent has not been changed because it was a consensus amongst the public as to what they wanted in the bill, and the opposition and government came to an agreement on how to make it happen.

So why are we as New Democrats proposing an amendment that says that the changing of standing orders should not be up to one individual party? It's the simple reason that we need to find a way to get the public to restore their confidence in this place. When we go home on the weekend—and all of us go to 10,000 events every weekend—we need to be able to look our constituents square in the eye and know that they trust what we're doing. They may say, “Well, you're a New Democrat”—or Liberal or Conservative or Green Party member—“and you have your agenda.” Fair enough. That's not a problem. There will always be politics in this Legislature; you can't get rid of that. But they want to know that the process that we follow here in the Legislature is one that respects them.

All of us have constituents who are concerned about particular issues. I use as a good example the City of Toronto Act that we just passed under Bill 5. Do you think that maybe the people of Toronto wouldn't have minded coming to this Legislature and speaking to that bill, especially when the government did not run on that particular issue in the last election? Would the government still have been able to get its bill passed if we had had public hearings, even for a week? Well, absolutely. They've got a majority. The government would have voted for their bill. Or maybe they would have amended the bill. But the point is, the decision would have been theirs. My point is, the government is always the one in control, especially if it has a majority.

1750

It just seems to me, Madam Speaker, that we're in this terrible situation with our standing orders. The standing orders are now designed, really, around the needs of one person, the Premier of Ontario. I don't mean just Mr. Ford. It was Kathleen Wynne before that, and it was Mr. McGuinty etc. before that if you go back to the time of the changing of the standing orders. But I think that's what makes people cynical about politics.

I was listening to some people on the flight when I was coming down here to Toronto from Thunder Bay this weekend. There were two millennials sitting about two seats behind me. All they could talk about for the entire flight almost, or at least two thirds of the flight, was how they had lost respect for the Legislature, specifically

around the Bill 5/Bill 31 issue. I didn't talk to these guys; they were talking on their own. They didn't even know who I was. All they were talking about and the point they were making was, how can the Legislature make decisions like that without coming back to the municipality and the citizens affected? Even they in Thunder Bay understood the basic idea that municipalities and citizens of those municipalities are the ones who should be charged with the right of what the size of their council should be.

The one young woman who was leading the conversation for the most part said, "Well, because the rule is that the government can do whatever the heck it wants." They understand, as the public, that things have changed such that there is no longer the type of democracy that we need in this place in order to respect the public.

With that, Madam Speaker, I would urge all members of the government and the opposition to support the amendment that we've put to this motion so as to allow a select committee to make the changes that need to be made to the standing orders in a way that respects people back home.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: Madam Speaker, it's truly a pleasure, and I want to acknowledge your efforts to make sure we're speaking to the amendment to the amendment to the motion. I'm going to do my best to adhere to that, Madam Speaker, because you've been a very big help to me today to make sure that my colleagues were able to address that as much as they could.

We're going to talk about the amendment that has been proposed by the member from Ottawa-Vanier, "that pending the work of the select committee on modernizing the standing orders"—Madam Speaker, this just seems to me a typical Liberal way to do what they've tried to do for 15 years: put everything through more bureaucracy, more administration and more study. Sadly—it does kind of sadden me that again, the NDP are standing and wanting to work with those Liberals in the same mindset. It's like that same enabling reality we've witnessed for 15 years where they propped up the Liberal government to ensure they stayed in power—

Interjection: Enablers.

Mr. Bill Walker: Enablers, as my colleague says.

And what did we hear on Friday? A \$15-billion deficit was created by that partnership. The Liberals, again, promised a \$600-million surplus. That turned out to be a \$3.7-billion deficit and \$338 billion in debt. So when I hear groups wanting to come again and say, "We want more study and we want yet another committee to be able to do something like this," it makes me very nervous.

I want to acknowledge again my colleague the House leader, the Minister of Government and Consumer Services and a proud member for three terms—now serving the people of Bay of Quinte—who brought these standing order changes to the table in a motion. What he wanted to see was that there would be more opportunity for debate. He is actually proposing in these changes to the standing orders that there would be 40 additional hours of debate.

That works out to about three weeks in this revered House, Madam Speaker, to do exactly what we're here to do, and that is to represent the people from our great ridings and to ensure the people of Ontario have the best legislation possible. I can't imagine that any member wants to delay that. Why would you want to do that through a committee when you can actually vote on this piece of legislation and have it, in practicality, ready to roll tomorrow?

He also pointed out very clearly that there were PMBs and there was a contradiction in the standing orders because of the old structure of government. We used to have three official parties, as we all know. Now we have two official parties and independent members. That PMB business was a 31-minute delay during which we actually had to recess this House so that no government business was able to be done in there. So I think again that it's a very practical, sound, reasoned acknowledgement of a change that is going to help us all be able to debate more and bring more of the issues of the great people that we are given the privilege to represent here.

I also want to acknowledge that he, our government and, in fact, the Speaker as well are acknowledging those independent members and have changed the standing orders to allow them to have an allotment of time in this House, because they were democratically elected. All of those people truly should be able to have that opportunity to speak. I struggle with the amendment to the amendment to the original motion, because to me it's more delay. It's more, "We want to study. We want to talk. We want to go out"—we had so many times through that Liberal government when they wanted to go put a commission together, a study together, and all the money that would be expended on that.

There are certain pieces of this that I think are very practical. It's going to allow further debate; it's going to allow additional debate. We are ensuring that we are getting the job done. The difference between the Liberals and the NDP—

Mr. David Piccini: Enablers.

Mr. Bill Walker:—enablers, exactly; that word keeps popping up, for some reason—is that they want more study. They want more of the ability to go through bureaucracy and administration and give power back to others to delay and slow down. We want action. Our government, under the direction of Premier Ford, has come in and started to already change—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the clock. We are in the home stretch, and I would encourage all members who just can't sit still to wait until we're finished for the day and to not heckle.

It isn't helpful when the member's own members are heckling. I'll do my best to hear him over his own members.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm okay with a little bit of heckling from either side. It kind of gives me a little bit more thought for my ability. It helps me to get a little more energized. Sometimes I have challenges with energy and getting all the words out.

I want to pay kudos to everybody. My friends at home, if they're watching, will know that they've been a big part of my being able to put up with a lot of heckling, because they have done that for a lot of years on the ball diamond, in the hockey dressing room and in the broomball room, and I'm quite okay with that.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Don't forget Michaela.

Mr. Bill Walker: And my wife, yes. You are correct: My wife, Michaela, also heckles me quite regularly, as does my colleague from Huron–Bruce, apparently.

As I say, we brought in these changes to the standing orders to ensure that there's more debate in this House, to ensure that the people of Ontario are getting served the most effectively that we can do that, and we're ensuring that as many of the challenges and issues they bring to us here as possible we're getting into this Legislature and we're able to truly debate. We're going to add, as a result of my colleague, 40 hours of debate, three more weeks of debate. We're going to rectify some things like the PMBs.

That amendment to the amendment to the debate, I want to just clarify: All it really wanted to do was add more delay. It wanted to add yet another committee to something that we can change today. I respect many of my colleagues across the way and I believe they brought very valid points, but at the end of the day, these are things that are practical that we can put into place very quickly. We can bring it to a debate, to a vote, which is again what Legislatures and democracy are all about. We can change these things that we've already acknowledged. I believe our great Clerks' table staff have acknowledged that there are some inefficiencies in our system because of the old way that it was structured. We're going to improve those. We're going to bring it to reflect the current realities of today—that we have an official opposition, we have two different independent groups out there and, of course, we have us as the governing body.

At the end of the day, I want to ensure that we can make these changes as quickly as possible. We want to ensure that we're able to debate as much as we can in here to set up a province that we're all proud of. We are bringing change to the province of Ontario. There was a big change in the last election, saying, "We want change. We want to make sure that you're working for the people," and I believe we are doing that. With something as significant as our standing orders, we need to ensure that they're working for the betterment of our province, in the best rights of the people of Ontario that we are given the privilege and honour to represent.

I again respect that it's always appropriate for anyone to bring, in this case, an amendment to the amendment to the motion. I've tried very diligently to stay on track and ensure we talk about that, Madam Speaker. I'd like to at this point announce that I will be sharing my time, the remaining time that's left very shortly, with the member from Huron–Bruce. I believe she wants to be on record, and I think that's very appropriate because she does a stellar job of representing the people of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. I know that every day, despite being elevated now to a minister and all of those responsibilities that she has there, she is still out and about all of the time, ensuring that she's listening to the people of Huron–Bruce so that, again, she can bring that back here and we have an optimum amount of time to debate the issues of today that are most concerning to the people of Ontario.

Higher hydro rates: We want to lower those rates. Gas prices: We want to bring those down. We want to ensure that we have the services at the front line when we need them, and we are going to continue to do that. We talked about jobs. We want to ensure that we are doing those.

Again, these standing orders will allow us to bring different thoughts to the table, so we can always have that ability to debate freely and openly, which is the right and privilege that we all have. We can all have the ability to represent the people of each of our respective ridings to the best of our ability.

Madam Speaker, I see that you're looking at the clock. Am I going to keep rolling or are you—I don't want to offend you, Madam Speaker. I've tried my best to work with you today to ensure that the House operates as effectively as possible.

Debate deemed adjourned.

VISITOR

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Point of order.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I just wanted to recognize an incredible person who has come to visit the Legislature at the very last few seconds of it: Camila Acosta, who is going to be doing her graduate studies in Germany and will make us all proud here.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. Tuesday, September 25.

The House adjourned at 1801.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Arthur, Ian (NDP)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Baber, Roman (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
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
Cho, Stan (PC)	Willowdale	
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
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	
Elliott, Hon. / L'hon. Christine (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Fee, Amy (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
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 Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
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 Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs 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 Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakubski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Wayne Gates
Stan Cho, Jill Dunlop
John Fraser, Wayne Gates
Stephen Lecce, Gila Martow
Jane McKenna, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Lindsey Park, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Timothy Bryan

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Président: Stephen Crawford
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
Ian Arthur, Stan Cho
Stephen Crawford, Doug Downey
Sol Mamakwa, David Piccini
Jeremy Roberts, Sandy Shaw
Donna Skelly
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Timothy Bryan

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Dave Smith
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Jessica Bell, Lorne Coe
Chris Glover, Christine Hogarth
Logan Kanapathi, Daryl Kramp
Natalia Kusendova, Amarjot Sandhu
Mike Schreiner, Dave Smith
Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: John Vanthof
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Roman Baber, Rudy Cuzzetto
Amy Fee, Vincent Ke
Andrea Khanjin, Marie-France Lalonde
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Jeremy Roberts, Marit Stiles
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Parm Gill
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Roman Baber, Aris Babikian
Nathalie Des Rosiers, Jill Dunlop
Parm Gill, Lindsey Park
Ross Romano, Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria
Sara Singh, Monique Taylor
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Présidente: Jane McKenna
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam
Robert Bailey, Rima Berns-McGown
Michael Coteau, Mike Harris
Faisal Hassan, Jane McKenna
Christina Maria Mitas, Sam Oosterhoff
Amanda Simard, Gurratan Singh
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

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