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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 19 November 2018

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 19 novembre 2018

The House met at 1030.

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have some special guests in the Speaker's gallery who I would like to introduce now: Sarah Crosby from Prince Edward Island; Eleanor Davidson and Nicholas Doiron from Nova Scotia; Delphine Ducasse and Gregoire Saint-Martin-Audet from Quebec; Fregine Sheehy, Guillermo Renna, Laura Fernz and Andrew Walker from Ontario; and Emma Lodge from British Columbia. This group is visiting from the parliamentary internship program in Ottawa to learn about Ontario's provincial Parliament. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

Mr. John Vanthof: I would like to welcome members from the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition here representing the livestock industry in Ontario.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I would like to introduce members of the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition who are in the members' gallery today: Joe Hill, Judy Dirksen and Eric Schwindt. I look forward to meeting with them later today, and I would encourage all members to attend their luncheon reception in room 228, right after question period, from 11:30 till 1:30.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I met today with two members of the association working with palliative care and hospice. I'd like to welcome Pam Blackwood and Cheryl Moore to the Legislature today.

Hon. John Yakubski: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park, in the members' east gallery this morning, my chief of staff at natural resources, Luca Bucci. Thank you for joining us.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Good morning. I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today Mary Chant and Marilyn Pickford, who are the family of a young page from my riding, Isabel Chant. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I have the pleasure of introducing to the Legislature today a constituent from McNally House, Pamela Blackwood, as well as her friend Clare Freeman. They are here today from Hospice Palliative Care Ontario. I thank you very much for coming to the Legislature.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'd like to welcome my good friend from Windsor Keith "Tracker" Traquair, who is the president of the Windsor Professional Firefighters Association. Welcome to Queen's Park, Tracker.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Speaker, It's my pleasure to introduce to you today, from Pathways to Education, a wonderful team who are true advocates at heart: Sal Sabila, Sue Gillespie, Roshaan Hajira and Marsha Josephs. They also met with the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to welcome Rick Firth, Jennifer Mossop and Megan Wright, who are here from Roger Neilson House and here with Hospice Palliative Care Ontario. They have a reception tonight. I hope everybody can make it. It's important that you're there.

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: I'd like to introduce today dear friends of mine: Samantha Scobey, Ryan Vandespyker and Raquel Franco. Thank you for coming. Two people are missing: Tristan Davies and Kenzi Donnelly. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, I want to introduce to you and through you to members of the assembly guests from Mexico who are here as guests of my issues manager and MPP liaison, Chris Crawford. I want to welcome Daniel Montoya and Monica Garza to Queen's Park. Thank you for being here.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and all members of this House. I'm happy to make some introductions this morning. I would like to welcome one of my constituents to the Legislature today, Mr. Ali Montazeri. Ali is a young professional and a master of information student in my riding of Richmond Hill. Welcome to Queen's Park.

I would like to welcome my husband, my better half, Mr. Albert Wai, who is serving at Tyndale University College and Seminary. Albert, I thank you for standing by me and supporting me as I serve in the House.

We're happy that he's joined by our good friends, my great mentors and supporters. First is Rev. C.Y. Yan. He is the director of Connections East Asia at OMF, Overseas Missionary Fellowship, founded by world-famous missionary Dr. Hudson Taylor 150 years ago. Then we have Rev. Peter Mah. He has just recently retired but has been serving in churches in Canada as well as as a director in local and international Christian organizations. He is my mentor, and he is one who has my highest respect. Thank you very much for coming, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature this morning Belinda Marchese and Renata Rizzardi, the executive director and president of the board of Hospice Vaughan; and Terry Mundell, the president and CEO of the Greater Toronto Hotel Association. Welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I just wanted to introduce my legislative assistant, Rory Taylor. He's down with me here

today from Manotick. I also wanted to recognize my OLIP intern, Hudson Manning. As well, I would be remiss if I did not mention Ryan Vandespyker, because he was a big help in Carleton before the member for Cambridge stole him away from me. Welcome.

Mr. Will Bouma: I'd just like to take a moment to welcome Miss Jennifer Haley to the House this morning. Of course, in St. George, we don't call her "Jennifer Haley." We call her "Guider Jen" because she has been involved for years in teaching our next future female leaders in our community.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Acting Premier. The government's fall economic statement shows a \$1-billion reduction in children, youth and social services compared to the 2018 budget. Can the Acting Premier explain what children's services this government plans to cut to realize this reduction?

1040

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much to my colleague for the question and for the referral. Last week, the Minister of Finance indicated that this province has a \$15-billion deficit.

That said, let's not talk about money; let's talk about real action. We have decided as a government to ensure that the ombudsman has more power to have investigative relationships within the children's aid societies. I had an excellent conversation today with the ombudsman and was interested to learn that for last year alone, 367 complaints were received by his office that had to be referred to the independent child advocate. We feel very strongly that this is a great opportunity for greater child protection in the province of Ontario.

I'll have more to say tomorrow in a statement, but I'm going to be perfectly clear with you: The independent ombudsman has done great work in the past, he'll continue to do great work in the future and we're looking forward to making sure that children in this province are safe with the aid of him.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. John Vanthof: A billion dollars in cuts, Speaker. Removing \$1 billion from children's services will have an impact, even if this government doesn't want to admit it or talk about it. The independent child advocate was a watchdog who ensured that vulnerable children had a voice when they were hurt by government policy. Did the government scrap this position to make it easier to cut the services that vulnerable children rely on?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I would have expected a lot better of the member opposite than a question like that. The independent Ombudsman of the province of Ontario has been robust and has been moving forward with a lot of

different investigations over the past. If what the member opposite is saying is that he does not have confidence in Paul Dubé, the independent ombudsman, then he should come straight out and say that.

I can tell you, having visited the youth detention centres which are underneath my ministry, that the ombudsman is well represented in those facilities. He will also be well represented within children's aid societies. But as I said to you on Thursday, I am an activist minister and I will be the fiercest advocate of curing this province, as I have been every single day on the floor of this Legislature for the past 13 years. So I turn back to the member opposite and ask him why he doesn't support the ombudsman.

Interjections.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: For years, parents have watched as waits grow longer for vital supports, like those that support parents of children with autism. But now we learn there are \$1 billion in cuts coming; not just a switch from one to the other, but \$1 billion in cuts which the minister isn't responding to. And the one watchdog who could be a resource and a voice for children as these cuts hit has been fired by the Premier and the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. What cuts is the government planning and what will their impact be on Ontario's most vulnerable children?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I have remained steadfast in my support of my ministry and my officials since being appointed to this cabinet on June the 29th. I want to continue to support the excellent work of the ombudsman as well as the Chief Coroner.

We had children die in the care of the province between 2014 and 2017, and I took immediate and extensive action the minute that coroner's report came out, and I was decisive. I said to the children's aid societies and I said to the group homes that although the buck stops with me, they have to have more responsibility. If that's not what the members opposite want, if they don't want action and they just want more talk, they can go for it. But I'm going to tell you something: the ombudsman and the Chief Coroner will continue to inform my office. I was pleased to have a strong and solid discussion with them today. We are going to make sure that we work with them, unlike the previous Liberal government who fought with the previous ombudsman and who fought with the Auditor General.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Ms. Sara Singh: My question is for the Acting Premier. The government says that vulnerable children in Ontario will not be spared from this government's cuts. However, they did find hundreds of millions of dollars for one group of Ontarians. It appears that the wealthiest in our province will be getting relief on high-income surtaxes, a change that will cost the treasury \$275 million.

Can the Acting Premier explain why Ontario can't afford support for vulnerable children but can afford tax cuts for the wealthiest in our province?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: We're very, very pleased to announce that in the few short weeks that our government has been in office we have found \$3.2 billion in savings and have turned over \$2.7 billion back to the people of Ontario.

The single biggest program we have, affecting 1.1 million people, is our LIFT program, our Low-income Individuals and Families Tax Credit. Speaker, this tax credit is for people earning \$30,000 a year or less, people earning minimum wage. This means they pay no provincial income tax—none, zero, nada. This is what we're doing with our \$2.7 billion that we've turned back to the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Sara Singh: Speaker, the Premier is just one of the lucky few Ontarians who will be enjoying this tax break. He'll actually be getting around \$200 back this year. So will his friend and former campaign tour director Ian Todd, as he enjoys his new patronage post in Washington. And one can only imagine what Alykhan Velshi will be receiving.

But Ontario's children will be getting cuts, and their watchdog will be getting a layoff notice. Can the Acting Premier explain to us how that's even fair for children in this province?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: The reality is that we inherited a \$15-billion deficit from the previous Liberal government. Through careful management, we were able to go through line by line and find \$3.2 billion in savings already, in only a few short weeks. We were able to turn that money back to the people of Ontario—\$2.7 billion given back to the people of Ontario. That is our plan for the people.

By the way, Speaker, we were also able to take the \$15-billion deficit inherited from the Liberals and remove \$500 million from that, lowering the deficit to \$14.5 billion. We have a long way to go and there is more work ahead.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: Speaker, we owe it to children in this province to give them the best start in life, especially vulnerable children like those living in residential care or those with multiple disabilities.

Our former Premier Bill Davis created the position of the child advocate for the very reason of keeping our children safe and to ensure that uncaring, unthinking governments didn't leave vulnerable children falling behind. Now Premier Ford is rolling out \$1 billion in cuts and firing the watchdog Premier Davis once put in place. And the government is even spending millions of dollars on his friends and giving his wealthy friends tax breaks.

Can this government justify how they have these warped priorities? Can you justify the decisions that you're making?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you to my colleague for referring it.

I take issue with the premise of that question. Premier Bill Davis was a visionary, and we're very proud that he

was a Premier of this province and was with our party. But he did not create the independent child advocate. It was created under the previous Liberal administration. It was born through government, Speaker.

I have a question for the member opposite: Why does she not have confidence in the Ombudsman of Ontario? As I stated in a previous question, over 367 complaints were logged from children's aid societies into his office that he had to refer out.

We are cutting red tape with this move and creating greater child protection for the people of this province. We have complete faith in the Ombudsman, who already has oversight over Ontario's school boards and Ontario's children's lawyer. Why don't they?

AFFAIRES FRANCOPHONES

M. Guy Bourgouin: Ma question est pour la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones. Madame la Ministre, les annonces de jeudi passé sont une réponse très claire aux besoins des Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes. En éliminant le Commissariat aux services en français et l'Université de l'Ontario français, on nous dit qu'on ne compte pas et que nos droits constitutionnels d'être servis et éduqués en français ne sont pas importants.

1050

Ma question est simple : Quelle explication raisonnable la ministre déléguée peut-elle fournir aux Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes à propos de votre décision de ne pas respecter nos droits constitutionnels d'être éduqués et d'être servis dans notre langue?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Je remercie le député opposé pour sa question, mais je lui demanderais de corriger ses propos et d'arrêter de diffuser des informations erronées. Nous n'avons pas aboli le commissariat; nous avons transféré toutes ses responsabilités, y compris son mandat, au sein du Bureau de l'Ombudsman. Donc, tout le travail qu'il fait, y compris les enquêtes sur les plaintes et le travail de recommandations, va continuer d'être fait par l'ombudsman. Nous avons confiance, complètement, dans l'ombudsman. Même le commissaire sera transféré s'il le choisit. Je lui demanderais donc, dans sa question supplémentaire, de corriger ses propos, parce qu'il essaie de semer la politique de la division, et je ne supporterai—

Interjections.

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

M. Guy Bourgouin: En tant que fier Franco-Ontarien et porte-parole du NPD en affaires francophones, je suis absolument horrifié par cette annonce. Mais cette décision n'est pas nouvelle. Les conservateurs ont toujours cherché à diminuer l'importance historique des francophones en Ontario, par exemple, en prononçant le discours du trône uniquement en anglais.

Ceci n'est pas une affaire éthique ou simplement linguistique. Les francophones sont un peuple fondateur du pays. Le bilinguisme est la base fondamentale de ce qu'on conçoit comme le Canada contemporain. Les gens

de mon comté? Plus de six sur 10 parlent, en français, à propos de l'élimination du seul bureau qui défend leurs droits et de l'annulation du projet d'université pour lequel nous nous sommes battus pendant quatre décennies.

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Comme je viens de le dire, le travail du commissariat va continuer et la surveillance indépendante des droits linguistiques va continuer au sein du Bureau de l'Ombudsman.

Pour ce qui est de l'Université de l'Ontario français, nous avons promis aux Ontariens que nous allions être honnêtes, et que nous allions rapporter l'imputabilité et la transparence au gouvernement. C'est exactement ce que nous faisons. Nous disons directement aux Franco-Ontariens que nous n'avons pas l'argent pour cette université maintenant.

Moi, j'aimerais demander aux libéraux, aux membres indépendants du caucus—de 2003 à 2017, ils auraient pu financer cette université, construire cette université, qui est très importante. Nous—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Monsieur le Président, ils n'ont pas construit cette université, ils n'ont pas mis le financement nécessaire derrière ce projet important pour les Franco-Ontariens. Nous, on est honnêtes.

TAXATION

Mr. Will Bouma: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Last week's fall economic statement sent a message to the people of Ontario: The days of Liberal waste and mismanagement are over. It is clear that our government is truly working for the people. It is so important that our government is taking immediate action to clean up the fiscal mess that the Liberals left behind, but at the same time, it is equally important that our government provides relief for those who need it most. We are proud that our government's first fall economic statement does exactly this.

Could the minister please inform the House what our government is doing to give relief to the most vulnerable in our society?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you to the member from Brantford-Brant. We're proud to put forward legislation that includes the Low-income Individuals and Families Tax Credit, or LIFT for short. If passed, the LIFT Credit will result in one of the most generous tax cuts for low-income earners in a generation. We are proposing that anyone earning less than \$30,000 a year pay no personal income tax. This change, if passed, would provide tax relief to 1.1 million people. That's 1.1 million people with more money in their pockets to spend how they choose.

This is the right thing to do. The people of Ontario finally have a government that's working for them, not the other way around. We will continue to do whatever it takes to bring relief to Ontario's hard-working individuals and families.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Will Bouma: Thank you to the minister for his response. It is so encouraging to see the action our government is taking to bring relief to people across Ontario. The LIFT Credit is an excellent way to put money back into the pockets of those who need it most.

The 1.1 million people who stand to benefit from the LIFT Credit, if passed, will see their lives become more affordable. These individuals and families will be able to keep more of their hard-earned money—and they've earned it.

Our government committed to respecting taxpayers by putting more money into people's pockets, and this is exactly what we are doing. Could the minister please further explain how people will benefit from our proposed LIFT Credit?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: If passed, those eligible for the LIFT Credit will receive up to \$850 per year in tax relief, or up to \$1,700 for couples. Our proposed LIFT Credit would also be provided to individuals with incomes greater than \$30,000 and families with incomes greater than \$60,000 on a graduated basis. The LIFT Credit is all about providing relief to those who need it the most.

We remain committed to putting more money in the people's pockets. Our fall economic statement highlights the \$2.7 billion we are returning to individuals, families and businesses in Ontario. For too long, people have waited for relief from their government. Finally, we can say that help is here.

CHILD ADVOCATE

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. Speaker, it's despicable that the Ford government has taken a huge step back by axing the child advocate's office, whose mandate was to amplify the voices of children and youth in Ontario. Simply put, the Conservative government has declared a war on vulnerable children and youth. It is completely unacceptable that this government is eliminating this very crucial, safe and supportive mechanism for children and youth to speak about being hurt, abused or taken advantage of.

This government has clearly demonstrated where its priorities are. Does the minister believe that children in care are no longer the responsibility of the province?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Obviously, children in care and children in the justice system are the responsibility of the province. I made that very clear after the coroner's report when I was the first Minister of Children in years to actually condemn those who were turning a blind eye to the protection of children and sent an immediate directive down through children's aid societies and group homes. I'm going to continue to do that as the minister responsible for children. That is why we are comfortable in expanding the powers of the Ombudsman of Ontario, who previously had those roles and responsibilities, and who has received over 367 requests in the last year alone that he had to refer.

We're cutting red tape. We're investing in children. We're going to make sure that there are greater protections.

1100

Let me be perfectly clear: While the advocate has made a contribution, it is the ministry that needs to take action and accountability, while holding our service providers to higher standards through robust legislation, and I'll continue to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Speaker, I believe that this is the same minister, when she was a critic, who blamed the Liberals for not going far enough with the child advocate's office, and now she's cutting it. Remember that, Lisa?

Speaker, far too often we hear about children and youth who die in care. That is why the Ontario child advocate was and will always be necessary. Abuse, neglect, trauma and even death are very real issues that children and youth face, as heard in the case of Katelynn Sampson. Too often, their voices are not heard. Vulnerable children and youth need a strong, independent advocate who can hear and amplify their voices to the government. Why is this government turning its back on our most vulnerable children and youth?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: It's important for me to remind the member opposite that there is a strong, independent advocate for children in this province. It is the ombudsman, who is an independent Legislative Assembly officer of this House. I have been perfectly clear that I am a strong, fierce advocate, as she well knows.

I want to really point out that we need to be advocating and demonstrating that the child is the centre of all decision-making, and the minister and the ministry are the best possible places for this to have a positive impact against the outcomes that desperately need to be improved. I'll be the fiercest advocate for children in this province, as I demonstrated immediately after the coroner's inquest, ensuring that there was going to be action and that those children in group homes would be protected. Our—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

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

TOURISM

Mrs. Nina Tangri: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Ontario's tourism industry accounts for over 4% of the province's GDP, making it a significant economic driver for Ontario. The greater Toronto area alone hosted almost 44 million tourists in 2017, with a total of \$8.8 billion in visitor spending.

Mr. Speaker, the importance of the hotel industry to tourism in the GTA and across Ontario is also hard to ignore. Our government for the people promised Ontario will be open for business. That's exactly what we're doing with our tourism partners. Can the minister update the House to our plan to drive growth in our tourism sector in Mississauga and all across Ontario?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville for that very important question. Our hotel industry is a key player when it comes to getting this province back on track. That's why we launched consultations to develop a new tourism strategy and unlock the potential of our \$34-billion industry. We're going to be listening to the concerns of hotel and motel operators during this important process.

Last week, I visited Sault Ste. Marie to consult with our operators in the north. Tonight, I'll be speaking with the Greater Toronto Hotel Association to offer our support for their growing industry. They're here in the gallery with us today. The GTHA have been working tirelessly to make Toronto and Ontario a destination of choice, and I look forward to continuing this important work together.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Through you, Mr. Speaker, thank you to the minister for his response. I am thrilled to hear about all the good work the Greater Toronto Hotel Association is doing to create a positive business environment for the GTA and for all of Ontario.

We're working hard as the government for the people to make life easier for Ontarians so that the tourism sector can flourish and create good jobs. It's an exciting time for the tourism sector across Ontario. Not only have we launched consultations for a new tourism strategy, but we have also committed to creating opportunity for the economy to flourish.

Would the minister please inform the House what steps the government is taking to support the tourism and hotel industries' continued success?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you to the member for that very important question. Our government has taken swift action to create the positive business environment that the hotel sector deserves. We know that a strong hotel industry plays a crucial part in making our entire tourism sector more dynamic. From taking a sensible approach to minimum wage to addressing unreasonable regulations, we are here to assist the tourism industry to flourish throughout the province.

That's why we're working on Ontario's new tourism strategy. We want to hear from the experts, the associations like the GTHA, whose leadership and expertise have contributed immensely to our economy. Today, I rise in the House to say to all hotel and motel operators, we value your hard work and we will continue supporting your efforts to make Ontario open for business.

ETHICAL STANDARDS

Ms. Sara Singh: Speaker, my question is for the Acting Premier. Last week, the Premier repeatedly refused to answer some basic questions about his standards for cabinet ministers. According to multiple reports, a female staffer working for the then opposition Conservatives came forward with a complaint of sexual misconduct concerning the Minister of Finance. On Thursday, the Premier said that he would not be taking any action on these allegations because an investigation had already occurred.

Can the Acting Premier please tell us who conducted this investigation, whether it was independent, and when it was actually conducted?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you for the question, but this has been answered by the Premier. The Premier has indicated that this was already dealt with, that it was dissolved, there was nothing there to be investigated, and that he completely stands behind our Minister of Finance, which all of us do as well. We stand behind him. We know he is a man of integrity; we know he is a man of commitment. There is nothing more that needs to be said.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Sara Singh: Last week, the Premier stated that he has a zero-tolerance policy for sexual misconduct and that he will always act decisively to deal with it, yet over the last month he has hidden key facts from the public when dealing with these very issues.

If an independent investigation has happened, the government should be able to tell us who conducted it and when it was conducted, and confirm that it was done independently. Can the Acting Premier confirm if and when an investigation occurred?

Hon. Christine Elliott: The Premier does have a zero-tolerance policy for issues of this nature, as do all of us. We want to make sure that, if someone comes forward with a complaint, it is going to be investigated and it is going to be investigated independently, as it was with respect to the Minister of Finance, who we stand behind. There was nothing there. That was disposed of. We do have a rigorous process in place.

The reason why specific issues were not coming forward with respect to issues that happened several weeks ago—allegedly—is because we need to protect the confidentiality of the persons bringing forward the complaint. That is absolutely important. They need to be able to come forward knowing that their complaints are going to be dealt with and that their confidentiality is going to be protected. That is the most important thing that we have to deal with, to protect those people and make sure that those investigations are conducted independently, which is being done.

1110

CHILD ADVOCATE

Mr. Michael Coteau: My question today is for the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. Minister, last week, your government decided to eliminate the provincial advocate's position. I was a bit surprised because I know the member personally has worked with the advocate's office. I think that the member opposite has done a lot of good work to support children here in the province of Ontario, without a question. I had the opportunity to work with her on Rowan's Law, and she is an advocate for children. I wish her well in the position.

So I was a bit surprised last week when that announcement came out. I would just like to know, because I know the member opposite has been very supportive of that office in the past, why the sudden change? I would like to

know if the recommendation to eliminate this important office actually came from the minister and, if not, who actually made the recommendation.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much to the member opposite, a previous minister of this portfolio. I'll be perfectly clear: This was a decision by the government that I fully support. I fully support it because 367 requests went in to the ombudsman last year alone from children's aid societies and he was not able to investigate. He is the appropriate person to make sure we have the protections in place for our youth, whether they're in care or in custody. I've had the opportunity, as the minister responsible for children and youth, to travel throughout the province and visit some of our detention centres, where the ombudsman actually had a greater presence than the child advocate.

While I thank the independent child advocate for his work, we are going to ensure his office moves over with the ombudsman, and we can make sure that the investigations that he undertakes are robust and that we will act immediately on them. We are also very pleased that he has the oversight of our school boards as well as our family court system.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I would like to thank the minister for the answer. The ombudsman, obviously, is a very important position, but the advocate had another function: to amplify the voice of young people here in the province.

There are many programs that the office has worked on over the last year by supporting young people and creating a forum, like Feathers of Hope, which provided 41 recommendations to address youth suicide in Indigenous communities; You Are Not Alone, which is an important initiative supporting LGBTQ youth here in Ontario; and HairStory, which was established in 2012 to help better position young Black people in this province for success.

So there is that amplifying-of-the-voice piece that was very important. There are many young people here in the House, and if the government doesn't believe they owe us in this House an explanation on why they decided to kill this position, please explain to the young people in this House today how their voice is going to be amplified here in Ontario without this important position.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Not a single oversight provision will be lost in these changes. In fact, because they are going to the ombudsman, they will be strengthened.

But the difference between this government and the previous Liberal government is that we act, and we act decisively. When the coroner's report came out on deaths in custody and of children in care, I acted immediately. I was the only minister of children and youth that the coroner had met with and had briefed on this, despite only being in power for four months.

Speaker, we are going to continue to make sure that children's voices are amplified, and we're going to continue to make sure that they're here at Queen's Park. They will be here tomorrow, and I'll be making a greater statement tomorrow on the international day of the child. I'm very excited to bring their voices to this assembly. But just

because it was done by the previous Liberal government doesn't mean it was done right.

GOVERNMENT FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: My question is to the President of the Treasury Board. In the length of time that this question period will take, the people of Ontario will have paid \$1.4 million in interest on a provincial debt of more than a third of a trillion dollars. My constituents are very concerned about how our debt and interest payments will impact the government's ability to provide services and invest in social supports. It is clear that the Minister of Finance and the President of the Treasury Board have been working tirelessly to reform the province's finances.

Last week, the Minister of Finance presented the fall economic statement to this House. Can the president please inform this House how the fall economic statement will put Ontario's economy and finances back on track?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you to the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for that question.

Mr. Speaker, under the Liberals, the people of Ontario paid more and more for less and less. That ended last week with the fall economic statement.

Interjection.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I like the fact that the Minister of Finance liked that.

In fact, we have already reduced spending by 2%, with no impact on service delivery.

While the opposition focuses on sound bites, here's some of what we propose: no Ontario income tax for 1.1 million people; \$40 million in tax relief for Ontario businesses.

The opposition said that it could not be done—that we couldn't reduce spending and that we couldn't make government better. Well, we did, we have, and we will.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you to the President of the Treasury Board for that answer.

It's clear that this government is serious about controlling spending while still providing the front-line services that Ontarians depend on, like better access to mental health services and long-term-care beds.

It's much easier to complain than to act. That explains why, after 15 years, we are cleaning up the mess they left behind.

Can the President of the Treasury Board please tell this House how else the government is helping Ontarians?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you for the question.

Our government has acted where the Liberals have failed. Everything announced last week by the Minister of Finance makes Ontario a better and stronger province for all. In a matter of weeks, we have reduced our deficit by \$500 million, yet we still increased funding to fight guns and gangs and are building 6,000 new long-term-care beds, all while putting \$2.7 billion back in the pockets of individual and family low-income earners.

We promised Ontarians that we would act quickly to get to work and make life better. The Minister of Finance

made it clear last week that help is not only on the way, but that help has arrived, and it's this government and this party that have delivered that.

GENDER IDENTITY

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is for the Acting Premier. This question is about the government's views on human rights and safety in our schools and communities.

Over the weekend, delegates to the Progressive Conservative convention in Toronto voted in support of a resolution dismissing gender identity discussions as liberal ideology that should be pulled from the school curriculum.

Will the Acting Premier denounce this resolution in the Legislature today?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the member to attempt to rephrase his question so that it pertains to government policy.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Speaker, my question is whether the resolution that was voted upon at the Progressive Conservative convention will become government policy.

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: The resolution from the weekend does not pertain to, nor is binding on, government policy. The answer is no.

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The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Quite frankly, we've seen what this government has done already in rolling back the health and phys ed curriculum. In statements to the press, Conservatives insisted this resolution represented a fringe view among PC members, even though it was supported by the overwhelming majority of convention delegates, many of whom are sitting across the floor right now.

Supporters of this resolution noted that it merely echoed the words of our Premier, who dismissed gender identity as "liberal ideology" when running for the PC leadership. Trans people, their parents and their loved ones are scared. Many tell me this resolution and the overwhelming support it received has put a target solidly on their backs.

The trans community needs to hear the Premier and the Deputy Premier say clearly that this decision was wrong, and that they think that the PC delegates who endorsed this resolution were also wrong.

Will the Acting Premier do that now and call on the Premier to personally do that later today?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I listened carefully to the supplementary and I do not believe that it was a question on government policy.

Next question.

GOVERNMENT FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. David Piccini: My question is for the Minister of Finance. We were so proud to release our government's first economic outlook and fiscal review last week. In reading through the fall economic statement, it's clear we've turned the page on 15 years of Liberal fiscal

mismanagement. Last Thursday, our government proved that help is on the way—help for over 1.1 million low-income Ontarians, help for our job creators and help for our next generation.

Could the minister please explain the progress our government has made in fixing 15 years of Liberal mismanagement?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you to the member from Northumberland–Peterborough South for the question.

During our government's first few weeks in office, we have taken immediate steps to tackle the \$15-billion structural deficit left behind by that Liberal government. Thanks to the hard work and dedication of everyone in our government, we have already found \$3.2 billion in savings. Thank you to the President of the Treasury Board for the great efforts on that. As a result, we are able to deliver \$2.7 billion in immediate relief for Ontario individuals, families and businesses. That's \$2.7 billion put back into the pockets of the people right across Ontario.

There's still a long road ahead but we have already made great progress. After 15 years, the people of Ontario are finally getting the relief they deserve and a government that is working for the people.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you, Minister, for that excellent response. Thank you for showing the youth here present that fiscal responsibility matters. Thank you for setting an important lesson in savings. Thank you for your swift action in tackling our deficit.

For the benefit of everyone here, Mr. Speaker, and to use an appropriate common analogy, it would take Drake over 2,000 years to pay off our debt. None of the young students here—who haven't even started working yet—deserves to owe \$22,000 in debt already, and they haven't even got a job yet.

Minister, thank you for your work in getting this province's finances in order. Can you please describe for us the road ahead?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Last week's fall economic statement was just the start of much more work to come. It is our duty to continue to strengthen our financial position. We simply cannot let the unsustainable practices of that Liberal government continue. Ontario remains the most indebted province or state on the entire planet.

In 2018, we will pay \$12.5 billion of interest on debt left behind by the Liberals. That's \$1 billion a month. As you heard earlier, since we've been in question period this morning, that's \$1.4 million in interest just in this last hour. This cannot continue. This puts the sustainability of our key services and our programs at risk. We must do things differently. We are committed to making changes today so that our government can continue to serve the hard-working people of Ontario for generations.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaking of fiscal responsibility, Speaker, my question is to the Acting Premier. Will the Acting Premier confirm to this House and for the

taxpayers of Ontario that the Premier's chief of staff, Dean French, personally called the chair of Ontario Power Generation and demanded the firing of Alykhan Velshi?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Greg Rickford: OPG makes their own staffing decisions. They're a crown corporation that is responsible for their own staffing decisions. OPG makes their own staffing decisions.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I know that this is an uncomfortable line of questioning for the Conservatives, particularly any fiscal conservatives who may still remain across the aisle. Dean French, the Premier's hand-picked chief of staff, personally and completely inappropriately intervened to get Alykhan Velshi fired after one day on the job, and as a result this Tory insider is going to take home half a million dollars. I mean, for \$500,000, at least make this guy rake leaves or shovel snow in the winter. Don't give him a gift-wrapped parachute for 24 hours on the job.

Will the Acting Premier please just answer the question? Did Dean French, the Premier's hand-picked chief of staff, fire Alykhan Velshi? And how much will his firing cost the taxpayers of the province of Ontario?

Hon. Greg Rickford: Let's be clear with respect to OPG's staffing decisions. Under an NDP government, the anti-nuclear democratic party, 7,000 people would have been cut loose. People looking for jobs to shovel snow and rake leaves—they'd be a talented workforce that's invested in committing to our electrical system, a key asset for this province moving forward. Imagine the chaos that would have ensued had those 7,000 hard-working people from the great Pickering–Uxbridge riding been cut loose. Those aren't the kinds of staffing decisions that we have to worry about—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. I understand that the government members are enthusiastic about the minister's reply, but once they stood up and started clapping loudly, I could not hear the minister.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Start the clock. Next question.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mrs. Robin Martin: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. As we have heard in this Legislature, our government for the people is delivering on its promise to make life more affordable in Ontario. Today I'd like to further discuss how this government is addressing the housing crisis left behind by the previous Liberal government.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard time and time again the struggles people face when trying to find housing in Ontario, especially in the GTA. As our population has grown, the housing market has not kept up. Instead of collaborating with the housing sector, the previous government enacted their own policies that choked the system with red tape and slowed down the building of houses.

When I was knocking on doors, one of the key concerns I heard was about how children would ever be able to afford to live in this city.

Can the minister please tell us what he has been doing to address the mess left behind by the Liberals?

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to thank the member for Eglinton–Lawrence for that excellent question and also for her concern on this file. We all know there's a shortage of housing that's affordable in this province. We continuously hear stories about people who cannot find a place to live, particularly in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

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This is why our government for the people is taking a new approach. We're going to be engaging communities and stakeholders to work together in developing innovative ideas to create housing. We're going to be cutting red tape to make it easier to build the housing we need. Since I became minister, Speaker, I've been actively engaged and have consulted with hundreds of housing stakeholders. We've been working to shorten the approval times to get buildings to go up faster.

Here's a quote from Daryl Chong of the Greater Toronto Apartment Association: "The lack of new purpose-built rentals in the city of Toronto is well documented. It has generated considerable 'talk' with very little 'action' over the past several years." And I'll be—

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the minister for that thorough answer. I know Ontarians will be relieved to learn of the commitment of this government to combatting Ontario's housing crisis. Last week, the Minister of Finance delivered the fall economic statement and outlined how we, as a government, are going to help the most vulnerable in our province.

I know how dedicated our Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is to working with our municipal and regional partners to create new housing, housing that is affordable for the people of Ontario. I know there is a lot of work ahead of us, but I have the utmost confidence in this minister to take it on. Can the minister please outline what steps he and his department will be taking to improve access to housing?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, I want to thank the member for that follow-up question. We all know that it's going to be a long road ahead to fix Ontario's finances, but between the Minister of Finance and the President of the Treasury Board, they've already been doing such an excellent job, and I believe it's certainly going to get better in this province.

In the fall economic statement, our government committed to engaging with the people of Ontario to find new, innovative ideas and to be engaging stakeholders to make housing more affordable, and we're not going to do that on the backs of taxpayers. We look forward to working with our stakeholders, the people of Ontario and all levels of government on ways to make housing more affordable in our province. I encourage everyone to contribute to our Housing Supply Action Plan consultations which are now live on the website. I want people to go to that website,

ontario.ca/housingsupply. We want to engage the public, we want to get those innovative ideas, but we have to create more supply—

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

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Jamie West: My question is to the Deputy Premier.

Jenny Fortin is a constituent of mine who for years worked as a precarious, low-wage retail employee. She struggled to make ends meet and fell into debt just trying to pay for the basics.

Last week, 113 people applied to speak about the roll-back of wages and workplace rights under Bill 47. Instead of listening to the voices of hard-working Ontarians like Jenny, the government limited committee to only 20 deputations over just five hours. Four didn't even receive the full 15 minutes to speak.

Why is this government shutting down the voices of the people who will be hurt most by this regressive legislation?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Laurie Scott: Look, we have been hearing from the people of Ontario for over a year and a half, since Bill 148 was introduced. We ran an election on the promise to make Ontario open for business, and that's exactly what we're doing.

Over the past months, the parliamentary assistants from Flamborough–Glanbrook and Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill have been meeting with job creators across the province. This is about securing Ontario's economic prosperity for the long term, making sure our kids have a brighter future than we did and making sure people like you've mentioned have the opportunity for better jobs in the province of Ontario. That's exactly why we introduced the Making Ontario Open for Business Act, because of the concerns we heard about Bill 148.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Jamie West: It would be nice if the government would also listen to workers as well as employers to get the full story.

During Bill 47 committee hearings, Jill Promoli shared the tragic story of her son Jude's death from the flu. It was the presence of one sick child at school who spread the virus to other children which resulted in Jude, a previously healthy two-year-old, contracting the virus and, sadly, passing away. Jill reminded us all that families need to be able to take time off work to care for their children when they're sick, to keep them and others safe. That is not red tape.

Why is the government disregarding the advice of doctors, medical associations and parents like Jill, who are warning us that doing away with paid sick days will put all of our health at risk?

Hon. Laurie Scott: Our government is seeking the right balance between protection of workers and not hobbling our job creators' ability to grow the economy or

limiting our capacity to attract new businesses to Ontario. The paid leave provisions that entitled employees to two full days of leave after only five days of work is unheard of in any other province in Canada. Combined with the 21% increase in the minimum wage, it put an intolerable burden on job creators.

Mr. Speaker, we want to create a province that's going to have better jobs for people, with better entitlements. And that's exactly what we're doing in the province of Ontario: creating better jobs for the people of Ontario.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Norman Miller: My question is for the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines.

I'm proud to be part of a government that is committed to making sure that families and businesses thrive. Our government is making the right decisions to make our province open for business.

Ontario used to be the economic engine of Canada, and after 15 long years of Liberal government, our province became sluggish and uncompetitive. But our government is turning that around, and I'd like to thank all the ministers who are helping our government to make Ontario open for business.

The fall economic statement proves how committed our government is to getting the economy going. That includes Ontario's northern economy, which has struggled for the last 15 years.

Can the Minister of Northern Development and Mines tell us what our government is doing to make northern Ontario open for business?

Hon. Greg Rickford: A \$14.5-billion structural deficit, more than a third of a trillion dollars' worth of structural debt, a debt-to-GDP ratio of 40.5%—it's staggering. The member from Parry Sound—Muskoka was right to point out that we're no longer Ontario's economic engine; we're its fiscal basket case, and we need to turn that around.

The opportunity comes from northern Ontario as much as it does any part of this province. We're seeing a rebound in the forestry sector by making strategic investments, reducing the regulatory burden so mines can open up, investing in skills and trades. We've got a promising future to open corridors for electrification and roads, so our Indigenous communities can contribute more heartily to a northern Ontario economy. Moving forward, northern Ontario holds the prosperity for this great province as much as anybody else.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Norman Miller: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines for leading our efforts to get northern Ontario open for business.

I know that our government is working to make the province an attractive destination for the private sector to do business and create good jobs. It is imperative that we defend and advance the province's economic interests.

This includes the metals and mining sectors, which provide economic opportunities for people in the north. These industries create good-paying jobs that make our province open for business.

Can the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines please tell the members of this House about how our government is committed to supporting the northern economy through the fall economic statement?

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Hon. Greg Rickford: Some of our colleagues were joking with us, saying it should have been called the "northern Ontario fall economic statement." That's because, for the first time in 15 years, after a decade and a half of darkness, northern Ontario is in the game, Mr. Speaker. We think we can make an incredible contribution.

We know how much we're in debt; we don't deny it. Unlike the new denial party, Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge the debt, and we see the opportunity that we can make.

We can't afford to have mines taking seven years to open—Sugar Zone, Mr. Speaker. We can't have mines making decisions to close prematurely because of a regulatory burden. We need to make sure that corridors are built so our Indigenous communities can make a fulsome contribution to our economy and enjoy a better overall quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to take a look at the several acts that burden us up in northern Ontario, cut that red tape, and open northern Ontario—

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

Interjections.

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

SENIOR CITIZENS' HOUSING

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. A constituent of mine, Ms. Janis Pinheiro, is here with us in the House today. Ms. Pinheiro, who is a senior, describes herself as a model citizen. She has worked her entire life and paid her taxes. Ms. Pinheiro has spent 12 years on the wait-list for subsidized housing before she was finally offered a small bachelor apartment, which she accepted, only for it to be withdrawn because she was working part-time. She has had two surgeries recently, and as her health continues to fail, all she wants is to move into the seniors' subsidized housing that she was offered, but instead, she's been put back on the waiting list. She is being penalized for working part-time.

Can the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing tell Ms. Pinheiro what he is doing to ensure seniors like her get the housing that she needs? Or does the minister expect her to wait another 12 years?

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, through you to the honourable member, and also to her constituent: This is an issue that our government is very, very concerned about.

I can tell the honourable member my own story about subsidized senior housing in my own riding. The very first

file I opened up in my MPP office in March 2010 was regarding a seniors' apartment building, a subsidized building that we wanted in my riding and in my home city of Brockville. Speaker, there was so much red tape and there were so many roadblocks in getting that building built and provided for those seniors. Next month will be the time when those seniors are going to be moving into that building.

Eight and a half years is too long to be building subsidized housing in this province. We're going to change that. My message to you and your—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That conclude the time we have for question period.

HAMILTON TIGER-CATS

Mr. Jim McDonell: Point of order: I just want to give the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek a chance to pay his debts for the loss of the Hamilton Tiger-Cats yesterday. I know he's lost three in a row, and I know it's getting hard on him.

VISITORS

Mr. Will Bouma: If I could, I want to welcome a member of my constituency staff, Seth Kamminga, to the House today. It's his first visit here. We're only as good as those people who represent us in the riding, and I'd like to welcome him here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, if you have a point of order, please say so. I can't read your mind.

The member for Chatham-Kent–Leamington.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my great privilege to introduce to the Legislature this morning Rick Firth, who is president and CEO of Hospice Palliative Care Ontario, as well as Jan Pearce. We had a wonderful meeting this morning in my office. Welcome.

Miss Monique Taylor: I see a good friend, Clare Freeman, in the House today. She's the executive director of Dr. Bob Kemp Hospice in the riding of Hamilton Mountain. Welcome to Queen's Park.

NOTICE OF REASONED AMENDMENT

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 71(b), the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas has notified the Clerk of her intention to file notice of a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 57, An Act to enact, amend and repeal various statutes. The order for second reading of Bill 57 may therefore not be called today.

This House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1145 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: Good afternoon, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce Amanda

Cresswell-Melville, the executive director of the Eczema Society of Canada; and Jennifer Aves, also an employee of the Eczema Society of Canada. Welcome to the Legislature of Ontario.

Ms. Jane McKenna: I would like to introduce Karen Candy, the CEO of the Carpenter Hospice in Burlington. It is an unbelievable organization, and they do an amazing job providing end-of-life services to the people of Burlington. I welcome you here today. She's not here right at this moment, but she will be.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TRANSGENDER RIGHTS

Mr. Joel Harden: It's an honour to rise in this House today to bring a very clear message from my community in Ottawa Centre, from our party and, I actually believe, from this entire House: Trans people exist, trans people matter, and all of those who want to suggest otherwise are living in an alternate reality.

This House, in the last Parliament, passed Toby's Law. Toby's Law was something that was brought forward with the sponsorship of the current Deputy Premier. Toby's Law acknowledged something that is startling to me: 77% of trans youth have contemplated suicide and 45% of trans youth have attempted it.

We have to create a province that's loving and compassionate. I think of people at home like D.J. Freedman, Behc Jax Lynx, Thane Robyn, Kaeden Seburn and Lyra Evans, the first elected trans education trustee in our country's history. That's the future. Let's not look to the past.

I want to salute Minister Thompson for saying very clearly in this House earlier today that that is not going to be the policy of this government. I want to salute my friend David Piccini from Northumberland–Peterborough South, who said very clearly to me earlier today that he's going to be driving two hours to a protest at his office to support trans rights and to participate in it.

That's the signal we're sending from this House today. Those who think otherwise should live in a different reality, not the one we live in today.

ECZEMA SOCIETY OF CANADA

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: Today, in honour of Eczema Awareness Month, the month of November, I would like to speak about the Eczema Society of Canada, a registered Canadian charity dedicated to improving the lives of Canadians living with eczema.

Eczema is a chronic inflammatory skin disease characterized by symptoms such as itch, dryness and rash, which can cause the skin to ooze, crack and bleed. It is a spectrum condition, and while it can be mild and often well managed, on the other end of the spectrum it can be moderate or severe, in which case it can be intensely itching, painful, debilitating and life-altering.

The Eczema Society of Canada offers education and support programs to guide eczema patients and caregivers regardless of the severity of their condition. They also educate Canadian health care providers to improve eczema care in Canada and, in the past two years, have provided certified or accredited continuing medical education programming to over 8,000 health care providers across Canada.

This is a crucial time for eczema patients in Canada, as recent research breakthroughs have led to many new drugs being developed for this condition. You can learn more about the Eczema Society of Canada and their programs by visiting eczemahelp.ca.

POET LAUREATE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: We aren't wearing our poppies anymore, but we are still in the month of remembrance. With that in mind, I'd like to put on the record a poem written recently by George Elliott Clarke. He's a former Canadian parliamentary poet laureate and a former poet laureate of Toronto.

Acadia University in Nova Scotia asked Mr. Clarke to write an alternative poem to the one we all know, In Flanders Fields. Here's his poem, "An Armistice At Last?"

That "Great War"—that "War to End War"? Didn't.
Thus every November the 11th at 11 a.m., ardent and strident
As bagpipes—we pray, baying just for that.
"Peace at last"—and a peace that lasts—instead
Of studding grave-plots with marble nobels
Statued soldiers—the famed—plus "Unknown"—
dead,
Life-like in stoic postures... Foibles?
Nay: Their heroics rendered them lifeless,
Then deathless! Now, they gesture and beckon
New gallants to new fronts and "success"
At killing or dying... (Choose what Reckon!)
If only an Armistice summoned Peace—
Not mere pause betwixt each bloody decease!

Speaker, once again we see the value in poetry and in having a poet laureate. Great Britain has had a poet laureate for something like 400 years; Canada has had one since 2002. We have them in towns, cities and counties all across Ontario. Other provinces have them, and there's no good reason why the province of Ontario doesn't have one.

Again, I call on the Conservative government to name a poet laureate for Ontario.

HOSPICE PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Hospice Palliative Care Ontario members are here today visiting Queen's Park and they're here to talk about something no one really likes to talk about. They are here to talk about dying. It's truly the

elephant in the room. We don't want to talk about it, but it's the one thing that we all have in common. We're all going to die and we're all going to lose loved ones. Very few of us, though, will die suddenly. In fact, 97% of Canadians will know when the end of life is coming, and they will need care. They'll need medical, spiritual, physical, psychological, social and many other types of supports.

That's what hospice palliative care is. It's holistic care to help us all live as well as possible to the natural end of life. That can often happen at home or in a residential hospice. We need more hospice palliative care here in the province of Ontario. That's why I'm proud to say that my private member's bill, the Compassionate Care Act, which was supported unanimously in this House, has passed second reading. It provides for a framework and reporting timelines to help us meet the inevitable demand for care.

I want to encourage all members in this House to welcome the compassionate care workers for their communities and thank them for all they do, because nothing else matters when the elephant is in the room.

TRANSGENDER RIGHTS

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Today I wrote a letter to the government.

"Dear government,

"What you're doing is hurting me; it's hurting us. But you don't seem to want to listen.

"When I was elected, I made a commitment to represent the people in my riding of Kitchener Centre. That means the people who voted for me and those who didn't, the people who are straight like me, and those who identify as queer.

"And I'm pretty sure that that's the same for you, isn't it?

"Well, when I found out about the resolution you overwhelmingly passed to no longer believe in trans folks, I was overwhelmed. I was overwhelmed because no matter what we say here today, the damage has already been done. The fear our trans friends and families feel is real. It's real today.

"We've spoken about this before. When you rolled back sex ed and removed overt references to LGBTQ communities, I stood up and I spoke out.

"I reminded you then, in the way that I'm going to remind you today: Not talking about something doesn't make it go away.

"So let me be clear:

"As a member of the official opposition, I will keep speaking to you about the harm that you're doing no matter how angry you get, no matter how much you try to ignore me and no matter how hard you fight.

"Because trans rights are human rights.

"It's time to do better.

"Our children are watching.

"Sincerely,

"MPP Laura Mae Lindo."

ANTI-RACISM DIRECTORATE

Mr. Michael Coteau: Today I want to talk about the Anti-Racism Directorate. It has been roughly half a year since Doug Ford and the Conservatives were elected into power in this province, and I want to bring up the fact that we still don't know what the status is of the Anti-Racism Directorate.

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In February 2016, we established the Anti-Racism Directorate. We had 10 public meetings across the province. A strategic plan was put forward in March 2017. We also passed the Anti-Racism Act on June 1, 2017, and an annual conference was held that year. The first Anti-Black Racism Strategy was put forward in December 2017. The OPS followed up with an anti-racism policy in February 2018. And the anti-racism standards were established on April 23, 2018.

Mr. Speaker, since then we've heard absolutely nothing about the Anti-Racism Directorate. Like the previous speaker said, not talking about something doesn't mean that it's going to go away. We need to talk about racism here in the province of Ontario. Racism is on the rise, and we need to make sure that we have a government that understands that when we all reach our full potential, Ontario reaches its full potential and makes Canada a better place. So I'd ask the government to come forward with the next steps for the Anti-Racism Directorate and allow us to reach our full potential as a province.

POLISH INDEPENDENCE DAY

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: On November 11, Poland celebrated its 100th anniversary of national independence. For Poles living all over the world, it is a day to salute those who have fought and died courageously to resist tyranny and preserve Polish sovereignty.

On November 8, I was honoured to commemorate this historic day by co-hosting a flag-raising ceremony and non-partisan reception with Mr. Krzysztof Grzelczyk, consul general of the Republic of Poland, alongside my colleagues the member from Etobicoke Centre and the member from Humber River–Black Creek.

Together with the Premier, the Deputy Speaker and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, my colleagues and I were thrilled to welcome several Polish government officials to Queen's Park, including Mr. Stanisław Karczewski, Speaker of the Senate of the Republic of Poland, Senators Aleksander Bobko and Piotr Florek, and Minister Jakub Kowalski. The day was filled with fruitful discussions about Ontario and Poland's thriving relations and how our governments can work together to foster even deeper economic and cultural ties, based on innovation, trade, investment and exchange of human resources.

Speaker Karczewski commended the 1.1-million-strong Polish diaspora in Canada for their excellent organization and work in preserving Polish traditions, culture and language in Canada, while being stellar and diligent contributors to the Canadian cultural, scientific, political and social fabric.

Premier Ford expressed his enthusiasm and interest in working with Speaker Karczewski and the government of Poland, restating our government's position that Ontario is open for business, which includes being open for business with Poland.

Lastly, I would like to thank all the MPPs in attendance, my wonderful staff, the Premier's office and the many individuals involved in making this historic celebration a success. On behalf of the Polish Canadian community here in Ontario, I thank you. Sto lat Polska.

AIRPORTS IN NORTHERN ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Kiiwetinoong.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch.

Remarks in Oji-Cree.

Thank you for allowing me to speak, Mr. Speaker.

Airports play a critical role in the Far North in this province. While most people in Ontario count on roads, highways, railways and transit systems to get around, remote First Nations communities count on airports. Ontario has more remote First Nations than any other region in Canada. I can say that airports are a lifeline for fly-in communities in the north. When we talk about the safety and well-being of our people, families depend on airports for health care, economic development, security, shipments, emergency care, high school—because we have to send out our children, by air, to another community for high school.

Also, with the effects of climate change, First Nations communities have to rely on airports even more. As I said before, warmer climates mean that there's a shorter season for ice roads.

Meegwetch.

HATCH

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Mr. Speaker, Mississauga–Lakeshore is home to many great businesses that support Ontario families and provide good, well-paying jobs supporting the local economy.

Last Friday, I had the pleasure to visit one of these businesses. Hatch was founded in the GTA but has grown into a global operation, with projects in more than 150 countries and employing over 9,000 people worldwide. Hatch is an example of exploring Ontario's economic and local communities.

However, what Hatch continues to do best is invest in Ontario and support Ontario families. Hatch employs more than 2,000 Ontarians, including 1,500 in my riding of Mississauga–Lakeshore.

When we talk about innovation, we need look no further than companies like Hatch. During my visit, I went on a virtual tour of the unit 6 reactor vault at Bruce Power, a tool built to help with the Bruce major component replacement, set to begin in 2020. Together, these companies are delivering on Ontario's largest infrastructure project at Bruce Power, which will support 22,000 direct

and indirect jobs annually and provide \$4 billion in annual benefits through direct and indirect investment. It will help keep the lights on in Ontario well into 2064.

Companies like Hatch and Bruce Power are innovating and creating jobs throughout the province and creating made-in-Ontario solutions for major infrastructure projects. I am proud of the work these Ontario businesses are doing right here in Mississauga–Lakeshore, and I'm proud that Ontario is open for business once again, Mr. Speaker.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I rise today to express my support for an issue that has come up in my riding of Brampton South. A lot of members of my community in Brampton South have been facing some issues and difficulty as owner-operators with CN rail. I had a chance to visit them not too long ago—two weeks ago—with my colleague Amarjot Sandhu. I know the member from Milton also had an opportunity to visit them as well. We listened to their concerns, primarily around safe working conditions and also access to sanitary bathroom use on the job.

Truck drivers are the base of our economy. They are hard workers, and we want to ensure that we lend our support. I lend my support to them as they use their resources and as they bring awareness to their cause at CN. I want to make sure that their voice is also heard here in the House, and we want to make sure that their hard-earned money that they've put towards their trucks and the resources that they use also go noticed.

I want to once again reassure that I stand with all of the hard-working truck drivers across this province and request the members at CN to take notice of the issues that they have put forward.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for London North Centre has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Education concerning changes to the education curriculum. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WOMAN ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH MOIS DE LA PRÉVENTION DE LA VIOLENCE FAITE AUX FEMMES

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I rise today with a profound and intense belief in the safety of women and girls, and I rise in this House recognizing November as Woman Abuse Prevention Month. Members of the House will be wearing purple scarves like these tomorrow in solidarity with

women who are escaping domestic violence and sex trafficking.

The purple scarf is a symbol of the courage it takes for a woman to leave her abuser and take back her independence and her life. The Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses started this campaign to let women who have experienced abuse know that they have our support and that they're not alone.

As women's minister, I stand fully and proudly with them. Women are three times more likely to be stalked and three and a half times more likely to be a victim of intimate partner crime. Indigenous women are three times more likely to be a victim of a violent crime and three times more likely to experience spousal violence than non-Indigenous women. These statistics, as horrific as they are, represent individual acts of physical and sexual violence against women, and it is happening right now in our communities across our province.

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We must bring change and progress to this issue. It's Ontario's dirty little secret, and it's time we opened all Ontarians' eyes to it.

The types of violence against women are many—sexual violence and harassment, criminal harassment, cyber harassment, sexual exploitation and domestic violence—but what they share in common is an attitude by the abuser that it is somehow okay to inflict violence on women and girls because they're unequal to men. We must change this attitude and the violent behaviour that results from it. I, for one, will continue to use my voice and this podium to make that change. Violence against women and girls is unacceptable.

Ontario first designated the month of November to shine a light on the issue of violence against women in 1986. That's more than 30 years ago. Over the decades, progress to end this problem has been made through crisis centres, helplines, shelters and public awareness campaigns. We've made great progress, yet daily we still hear stories of women who have survived horrific experiences, and worse, of those who lost their lives to senseless violence.

We can no longer turn a blind eye to this toll, and so we use November to give violence against women the attention and profile it deserves. On November 25, the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign begins. This is an international campaign linking violence against women to human rights. That's because violence against women is a violation of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms. And that's why our government for the people is taking action.

As Ontario's women's minister, I'm pleased to announce that today in this assembly, our government is creating a consultation group on violence against women. We will be tapping into a vast network of community partners to help stop violence against women and improve survivor services in the province. Partners will share their expertise on a wide range of issues, like domestic violence, sexual violence, human trafficking and elder abuse. These conversations are key to helping women affected by

violence and exploitation receive the support they need, while making sure that offenders are held accountable through the justice system. I'm looking forward to working with community leaders to lift women up and create a society where they are safe and supported.

I'm also excited to be making a further announcement tomorrow, so I ask members to stay tuned.

There are so many fantastic organizations that are keeping this conversation on violence against women alive and moving forward across the province.

OAITH has its *Wrapped in Courage* campaign. I'm looking forward to joining them tomorrow over breakfast, and I invite all MPPs in this assembly to join them.

White Ribbon's campaign starts this weekend. It is the largest movement in the world of men and boys working to end violence against women and girls. We don't just need strong women supporting these women; we need strong men supporting these women.

And the UNiTE campaign, which includes a march to end violence against women and girls in Ottawa—in the nation's capital—on December 1.

I'm also working with the Shoebox Project, which my seatmate, Caroline Mulroney, our Attorney General, started and her brother Ben Mulroney has continued to support. Together, we are encouraging all members of this House to fill a shoebox with little luxuries so that women in our VAW shelters and our human trafficking centres can find a small sense of normalcy this holiday season. We have shoeboxes ready and waiting for pickup today, so please contact my office if you need a pickup.

I'd also like to say thank you to my opposition critic, Suze Morrison, for her participation in this, as well as Liberal MPP Mitzie Hunter and PC MPPs Gila Martow, Kinga Surma and Lindsey Park for their leadership in supporting these women in our shelters across Ontario.

I'm proud to say that I'll be marching in the UNiTE march this December, and I hope some of my colleagues in the House will also be able to attend events throughout their community. We must continue to work, 12 months a year, to raise awareness and change the deep-seated attitudes and behaviours that lead to violence against women. We've taken big steps towards recognizing women's rights and gender equality, and I'm proud of the achievements we've made so far to help those who have experienced abuse feel safe and supported. This is what our government for the people is about: getting those in vulnerable circumstances back on a solid footing.

Ontario is considered a leader in Canada for our work to address violence against women and to help survivors live without fear, but we cannot stop until we have put an end to violence against women once and for all. It is for that reason I appeal to all members of this assembly, regardless of their political stripe and regardless of where they come from, to support us in this work.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

Ms. Suze Morrison: This past Friday, I had the incredible opportunity to meet with women who work at the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre/Multicultural Women Against Rape. I am grateful that these women who provide an

absolutely essential service in our community were able to make time out of their busy schedule to meet with me.

The Toronto Rape Crisis Centre has served the community for 45 years, and their work is commendable. On an incredibly tight budget, the seven full-time employees who operate this organization are able to provide truly life-saving services, including a 24/7 phone hotline for survivors, free counselling, court support, advocacy, and support groups.

Unfortunately, the occasion for the meeting was not a happy one. Every day, this great organization struggles to figure out the best way to stretch their money to be able to provide full support for survivors, and the demand for those services grows every single day. As we sit here today, the wait-list for survivors to access free, face-to-face counselling at the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre is 18 months, Speaker. This is a disaster. If you are a woman in dire need of counselling who is unable to pay for that out of pocket, you should not have to wait a year and a half to get access to the services that you need.

It is no secret that as more women come forward with their stories, demand for counselling and support services is rising. We are in a climate where more survivors are finding the courage to come forward. With every high-profile case of sexual assault in the media, service providers see immediate surges in their phone lines and counselling requests. Shamefully, this government has still not released the funding that was promised to rape crisis centres across Ontario.

This past spring, rape crisis centres were promised an increase of 33% across the sector to address gender-based violence, and this government has not honoured that promise. Allocation letters have been delivered to centres across the province advising them of how much money they would be getting to hire additional staff to do the direct work of supporting survivors. These organizations have been stretched too thin, and this promised funding would have eased the pressures that they're facing. Instead, this money is still being withheld.

Speaker, violence against women is no joke. We keep seeing high-profile scandal after high-profile scandal around allegations of sexually inappropriate behaviour from both members and staff inside this government. While the Premier and the minister talk a good talk about creating safe spaces for women and ensuring that Queen's Park is a good work environment, I'm having trouble seeing them walk the walk. We cannot stand by and ignore these scandals and pretend like there is policy or money going towards gender-based violence.

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Let me remind this House that in 2016 there were 50,000 calls made to sexual assault centres in Ontario. Sexual assault and violence against women is widespread, and the caucus opposite is not immune to it. The way forward is by providing funding to crucial services in the sector to ensure that they are supported in the work they do to make the survivors' lives easier.

While our caucus is happy to support the Shoebox Project that the minister spoke about, and our members

will be eagerly donating items to go to shelters through that initiative, it's a small gesture to a sector that's in dire need of systemic change and a strategic, intentional effort to end gender-based violence. I might ask the minister if she's planning to put funding letters in the shoeboxes as part of this project, because that's what women in Ontario really need, not a government that continues to ignore the crisis of gender-based violence in this province, that continues to cut services to the sector and that thinks a small holiday gesture is enough to compensate for a chronically underfunded and neglected sector. No woman in this province should be waiting 18 months to access counselling services after a sexual assault. As a survivor myself, I'm truly horrified that that is the wait that women are facing.

I am calling on the minister and this government to do better.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: Violence against women is costly. It prevents women from working and from caring for their family. The fear of violence prevents them from going out, from applying for a promotion, from engaging with their community. It's costly in terms of health care costs, but it's also very costly in terms of lost talents.

My own involvement in this issue has been long-standing. One of my first academic articles, actually, was on breaking the silence for survivors of childhood sexual assault—the way in which the law at the time prevented them from suing their perpetrators because of time limits. Eventually, the Supreme Court agreed, and we allowed some survivors to sue their abusers despite the passage of time. My focus then and my focus now is that we need to ensure that women have a voice and that they are heard, that they feel empowered to speak and they are not silenced.

Since 1995, I've seen how stopping violence requires an all-encompassing approach. To prevent violence against children, and against girls, we need effective mandatory reporting as well as empowering children to name what they're living. That's why the health curriculum has to name body parts and provide education to children so that they are able to say what is happening to them. That is why, in my humble opinion, the child advocate was an important tool to continue to empower youths and girls to take ownership of their issues, build resilience and speak out—the trafficking, the bullying and the sexualization of their lives.

I was very proud of the Liberal round table on gender violence, and I am happy to see that the minister has agreed to surround herself with some advice. I think it is crucial, and I wish her well in that endeavour.

I was very pleased that last week the Ontario student association suggested that Smart Serve training be completed by a mandatory component on bystander intervention, which would allow servers to intervene and know what to do when they see sexual violence just about to happen. I was very pleased about the work that we did to curtail violence on campuses throughout Ontario.

As women move into the workplace, we need good enforcement to prevent sexual harassment. We need paid

sick days so that they can protect their privacy and get the help they need. Access to choices for women is important so that they can decide when they need to leave. Access to sufficient social services is important so they can decide that they want to leave.

There's great isolation for women who recently arrived in Canada, and they need help in naming the violence that they experience.

Indigenous women, as we know, experience violence at an unprecedented rate.

The way older women experience violence in residential treatment, in their home, as they become dependent on caregivers and have less choice about where they live—this indeed is an issue that was raised at the round table with seniors that I held in the riding of Ottawa–Vanier just last Friday.

Les femmes francophones ont besoin de services qui répondent bien à leurs besoins. C'est ce qu'elles veulent et c'est ce qu'elles m'ont exprimé. Beaucoup de femmes dans Ottawa–Vanier viennent dans mon bureau et me racontent leurs histoires de violence, de harcèlement et d'impuissance par rapport à ce qu'elles vivent. C'est un problème complexe qui continue de coûter très cher à l'Ontario.

Just last Friday, I had someone in my office wanting to get some help on how to access better protection so that she would not be followed and harassed by a past abuser.

I hope the new minister will take a comprehensive approach to violence against women. I hope that she will ensure that the Attorney General continues support for victims as they access criminal trials; that the services are fully funded—sexual assault centres need to be funded, and she needs to do it now; and that she will continue to rethink her position on the children's advocate—I think it's a big loss to the empowerment of girls to speak out about their issues. And I hope that on November 22, when she comes up with her proposal to change social assistance, she will remember the link between poverty and violence against women. I agree with her that it is crucial that we all work together to pursue our actions to end gender-based violence. It's a question of justice, of human rights and of prosperity.

PETITIONS

INJURED WORKERS

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I have a petition entitled, “Workers Comp Is a Right.”

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

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

“Whereas decades of cost-cutting have pushed injured workers into poverty and onto publicly funded social

assistance programs, and have gradually curtailed the rights of injured workers;

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

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

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

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

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

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

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Joel Harden: I have a petition—several petitions, in fact—to give to the Legislature today 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 ... 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;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I intend to sign this petition and give it to page Andrew for the Clerks’ table.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I have a petition entitled, “Stop Doug Ford from Cutting Mental Health Care.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas an estimated 12,000 children”—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Excuse me. I know that’s the wording in your petition, but if you’re going to read that petition, you’ll have to say “Premier Doug Ford” or mention his riding. I’d ask you to withdraw that portion and then continue.

You will stand and withdraw mentioning him by name and throw the word “Premier” in front of his name. How’s that?

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Yes. I have to find it.

Withdraw.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Just continue.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Oh, okay.

“Whereas an estimated 12,000 children are waiting up to 18 months for mental health care, and there are 63% more children in the ER for mental health issues than there were in 2006;

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

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

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

I fully support this petition and will sign my name to it.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I continue to receive thousands of petition. I want to thank Lewella Parker from Garson in my riding for sending in those petitions. It reads as follows:

“Save the Breast Screening and Assessment Service.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

is very stressful for women diagnosed with breast cancer; and

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

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

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

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

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Suze Morrison: I’d like to read a petition entitled, “Stop the Cuts to Indigenous Reconciliation.” It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario is situated on the traditional territory of Indigenous peoples, many of whom have been on this land since time immemorial;

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

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

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

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

“—reinstate the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation;

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

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

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

I fully endorse this petition. I will be affixing my signature to it and providing it to page Shlok to deliver to the table.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Deepak Anand: Before I start my petition, Speaker, I want to tell you that I do miss you not being in my vicinity.

This is a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

“To Ensure the Safety of Residents of Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I proudly sign this petition and give it to page Aditya.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Ian Arthur: The petition is titled, “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;....

“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 wholeheartedly endorse this petition. I will affix my name to it and give it to page Andrew to deliver.

VETERANS MEMORIAL

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: I’d like to present a petition.

“Petition in Support of Constructing a Memorial to Honour Our Heroes.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas the Premier made a commitment to the people of Ontario to build a memorial to honour the bravery and sacrifice of our armed forces; and

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with the content of this petition, I affix my signature to it and I’m giving it to page Zoe.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Marit Stiles: I’m pleased to present, on behalf of my constituents, a petition 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’m presenting this petition on behalf of my constituent Maureen O’Reilly, and I’m happy to affix my signature as I support the petition. I’m going to hand it to Lillian to table it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE CLASSROOMS ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 POUR DES ÉCOLES SÛRES ET AXÉES SUR LE SOUTIEN

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 14, 2018, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 48, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to education and child care / Projet de loi 48, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l’éducation et la garde d’enfants.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I’m quite honoured to speak to this particular bill, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, 2018. I do think that one of the real questions is how we can actually keep children safe. I’m going to make a suggestion, a leap of faith that the other side would agree that we have to address the root causes of what is creating the lack of safety.

Sometimes, it makes it difficult for us to agree on these things, because there seems to be a tendency of putting more than one really important issue into a particular bill. In this case, it’s important for me to say on record, given my background in education, that it does make it really difficult to engage in an authentic, critical debate when we’re talking about issues that on their own require time,

energy and commitment to discuss. However, I will do my best.

When it comes to the math test, for instance, I think it's really important to reiterate, as many of my colleagues on this side of the House have noted, that schools have been underfunded for far too many years. That becomes the reason we have the issues that we do in schools. Sadly, the lack of funding doesn't seem to be something that my colleagues on the other side of the House are willing or want to actually rectify, which brings me to some letters that I've received in my own riding regarding the Parents Reaching Out Grants.

Sometimes, parents have to step in and do things to support educators because of the lack of funding and because of how long it has been that our schools have been underfunded. For instance, I received an email from Carli Parsons, who explained to me that the Parents Reaching Out grant was being used to provide additional mental health support to parents and families at St. Anne Catholic school in my riding.

Rachel Bolton also sent me a letter. The letter was actually to the Minister of Education, and I was also copied. It's really interesting; Ms. Bolton's letter explained that particular schools without the Parents Reaching Out Grants would be more impacted by the lack of funding than other schools. I'm going to just take a minute, with her permission, to read from her letter.

Rachel Bolton writes: "I am the co-chair of the parent council at my daughter's school, King Edward Public School in downtown Kitchener. Our school's population is unique—more than 30% of students are refugees or immigrants, based on the statistics of how many do not have English as a first language; I have been told that approximately 60% live below the poverty line and I know that we feed between 30% and 50% of our students breakfast each day through the Nutrition for Learning program. In this kind of school population, these engagement activities are even more important as it can be assumed that families likely have lesser opportunities for engagement in education than families in more established or affluent communities.

"To read today that the PRO grant program has been put on pause is deeply disheartening. While last year's People for Education study found that the average amount fundraised by elementary schools in Ontario is approximately \$20,000, our school is only able to raise approximately \$5,000 each year. The \$1,000 we have received each year from the PRO grant is included in this amount and represents a loss to us of 20% of our anticipated funds for this year. The loss of this funding actually means the cancellation of parent engagement programming for schools like ours, not just having a little less to allocate to other efforts like more affluent schools."

I wanted to take the time to read that portion of the letter because I think we sometimes forget that not every school across Ontario is equally funded. Even in a situation where we're dealing with the lack of funding for schools, it's important to note that that will be particularly pronounced in some neighbourhoods more than other neighbourhoods.

Where we might think that something as small as \$1,000 in a school will have no impact, I just want to be clear and add to the record that \$1,000 has a huge impact on schools that can't rely on parent fundraising to do the work that, to be honest, they should be able to believe that our Ministry of Education would in fact be doing: providing funding to make sure that our students are kept safe, our students are educated, and also educated in extra-curricular ways.

So there will be things that we can do in the curriculum. There will also be a lot of things that we have to do outside of the curriculum, to enhance the curriculum, to support the curriculum, and to support parents who are bringing their kids into our schools.

In a situation like Ms. Bolton's, in a school where you have a number of people who may not have been educated here, they too need support to understand how to keep their kids safe in a brand new space.

With that being the case, I kept thinking about a couple of theorists I learned from when it came to my approach to education. I just wanted to take a second to quote Paulo Freire. This is from his text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which was first published in Portuguese in 1968 and then translated in 1970 into English. Freire writes, "Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world." I'm going to just read that last little part, because that's the vision of education. That is the reason why Freire is such an important person to think about when we're going to sit in the House and together write legislation that will have such an impact on our educational system in Ontario. Education can become "the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world."

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I have to argue that the students who are protesting the rollback of the sex ed curriculum, the students who walked out all across Ontario to say that they needed to learn about consent, that they needed to learn about LGBTQ communities, about what would keep those communities safe—I have to argue that those kids not just in my riding of Kitchener Centre, from Eastwood Collegiate and Cameron Heights, but from across Ontario came here. They came to Queen's Park to show that this was not something that they wanted. That means that students in 2018 are fighting to participate in the transformation of their world. They're fighting to be given an opportunity that Freire has said education can provide.

So how do we actually build stronger educational legislation? I'm going to take us even further back, because I'm a philosopher by trade, so why not? Here we go, my friends. I'm going to turn to Jean-Jacques Rousseau in his book *Emile or On Education*. He published this in 1763 and he argued that every society

“must choose between making a man or a citizen.” Of course, in the 1700s, we often only looked at “men” as the way to speak of all people, so the gendered pronoun situation needs to be questioned and noted; I’m with you. But I think there’s a bigger point that Rousseau had. The bigger point is that there is a difference between individuals and what education is supposed to do: build citizenry, citizens who are brought together and united because of a common understanding of who we are and how we should care for others in community.

We can’t do that if we take out of the curriculum the actual existence of people who are different than us. I think that becomes something that we have to take some time to think about before we sit and agree to pass legislation that is going to have an intergenerational impact on young people and on teachers. Sometimes with our focus on the students in the classroom, we forget that teachers are educated in a system that now has to change because of the lack of desire to speak about queer communities in the classroom. That means there would be a generation of student teachers who were in the Ontario College of Teachers who are going to have to learn how to not teach about something that they might be a part of, communities they might be a part of, because we do have queer teachers, my friends. We have trans-identified teachers. And they may now have to figure out, “How am I going to teach in this way?”—in a way that silences who knows how many people in their classrooms and their schools. So there is going to be quite a little impact that we have.

For Rousseau, he believed that education transported people to unity. It unified us as people, as critically engaged citizens. So he argued for high-quality education, but people may not realize that even in 1763 he argued that women should be educated with the highest quality of education that men receive.

I would argue that it’s 2018 and I cannot believe the words that will come out of my mouth—and I’m not going to swear; inside voice. But what I will say is this: In 2018, I am standing up in this amazing House, with all of my privilege, and I have to say out loud, on record, that trans students deserve to know how to be safe and secure in their schools, that queer students—2018, my friends—have to be provided with an education, a curriculum and an environment that provide them with safety and care. I can’t believe I have to say that in 2018.

Ms. Marit Stiles: It’s not 1818.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: It’s not 1818 but it feels like 1818, because I had walked into the field of education with an understanding that we all shared and were unified across political spectrums, across political stripes, in an understanding of humanity, and that the Human Rights Commission had done so much amazing work to allow us to understand that folks who are on the gender spectrum deserve respect and care and safety. It’s 2018 and I have to write notes that say things like, “It’s okay to be queer” and, “You deserve to know about your health care needs, and what a family looks like and feels like, and that no one else should hold that against you.” It’s mind-boggling to me.

To be honest, I might as well say for the record that, walking towards the House today, knowing that I had to say these words, I had an asthma attack. I had to pause in front of Women’s College Hospital and take my inhaler because it was so physical-anxiety-filled to think that this is what has happened in 2018, since June. It has not even been that long. It has not even been that long.

My daughter is also at home. I talk about her often. I speak about her because she identifies as queer. She has gone and petitioned the Waterloo Region District School Board to reinsert the original curriculum so that she could feel included in schools. Instead, what has happened is that she has been met with a slew of homophobic and transphobic bullying, not even directed at her always, but directed at her peers.

This morning, I got a phone call saying that she was feeling so filled with anxiety because there’s a word that starts with an F that’s pretty derogatory and that most people usually don’t say about queer folks right now that’s now on the rise in grade 8. Why? Because leaders like us are having debates in 2018 about whether or not queer folks should be included in our curriculum. There’s a direct correlation.

They’re also hearing the N word making its appearance in grade 8, because I also have to stand here and say it’s really important to put money, funding and resourcing behind the Anti-Racism Directorate, also something that needs to be addressed.

The fact that we would think it’s okay to stop curriculum-writing sessions for teachers when it comes to Indigenous histories days before the curriculum-writing sessions were supposed to start is also something that falls under the very strange things I have had to say, words and ideas that I never thought would have to be forwarded to a group of adults who I want to believe care about the people who are in Ontario.

So I am begging that the other side pay attention, listen to the harm and do better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Parm Gill: I want to thank my honourable colleague from Kitchener Centre for her remarks. This is an important piece of legislation, and I want to thank my colleague Minister Thompson for bringing this piece of legislation forward.

As I think we can all agree in this House, the most prized possession or precious possession in any parent’s life is obviously their children. I am a proud father of three. Of course, every parent, every grandparent, wants to make sure that kids are protected in the environment they are taught in and also that they are provided with the skills needed to succeed in life.

This bill does a lot of those things, and I can tell you that I continue to hear in my riding of Milton, not just during the election campaign but since, parents talking to me at events and parents talking to me in the community and offering their support and words of encouragement in terms of what this government has been able to do in a short period of time in many different areas, but I think the

most important one is education for our children, especially when it comes to simple things such as math skills. I can tell you that families in my riding of Milton are spending hundreds and, in some cases, thousands of dollars sending their kids to after-school programs. Unfortunately, I am one of those parents who had to send my youngest to after-school programs because the kids are not getting the skills that they need, the basic skills in school. It's important for us, as legislators and as government, to make sure that we provide all the necessary tools for our kids.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Faisal Hassan: The root cause of the problem here is that the classrooms are underfunded. The Ford Conservative government is taking that problem from bad to worse. We have huge class sizes, too few resources for special education and struggling students—teachers don't have any time anymore for one-on-one help for students—and crumbling schools that are freezing all winter long because they are desperately in need of repairs.

Our children need more opportunities and better resources, not cuts to services—cuts to the \$100 million that was about to be used for school repairs, crumpled after-school and parent-led programs by cancelling math upgrading support for teachers. The current education funding formula is hurting our children, and this is the root cause of most issues here. What we need is also to listen to parents coming together for issues that are important to the parent-led activities that now have been cut and—yes, thanks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Yes, thanks.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Billy Pang: In our publicly funded education, equity and inclusivity are very important and are mandated in our Education Act. Unfortunately, in the last decade only a couple of initiatives were repeatedly supported, and that's what our colleague said. We need a bigger spectrum, but in the last decade only a couple of initiatives were focused on. Students have been ignored. A lot of them have been ignored and undermined because they have other challenges in their lives.

Students facing different challenges should be supported as well. They should benefit from publicly funded education, Mr. Speaker. As a previous school board trustee, I went to school every week, every other day, to meet with parents, shake hands, talk with them and talk with students. I—and the parents—faced a lot of different challenges in the school.

This Bill 48: I find that it supports students. This is a very big step to support parents who were ignored in the past decades. The Minister of Education understands that animals and therapy animals provide a wide range of therapeutic, emotional and physical support for individuals. They can help students to feel safe at school, with the company that they know.

In consultation with appropriate stakeholders, the ministry intends to provide guidance to the board regarding

service animals in the context of the publicly funded education sector. Mr. Speaker, I believe that this is a very good—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you.

Questions and comments?

Ms. Marit Stiles: I want to, first of all, start by thanking the member for Kitchener Centre for her very thoughtful comments. It's really such a pleasure to listen to such informed comment on the bill, and also bringing some of the personal perspective. I really appreciate it. I wanted to mention, just to reiterate some of the points that the member from Kitchener Centre made, particularly bringing the voices of the families that she's heard from around the Parents Reaching Out Grants. As many here will know, the government has yet to formally inform anyone that those were paused or frozen or cut, however they want to portray it.

I really appreciated hearing more about some of the vast array of programs that are supported by those grants and why they're so fundamentally important. One of the things that they do, as she pointed out, is that they bridge the gap between schools who are able to fundraise—in more affluent communities, usually—and those who have more difficulty.

I know in my own riding of Davenport there are many schools that are unable to fundraise more than, really, a few thousand dollars every year, and they do all kinds of things to try to raise that money; it's not like they're not trying to fundraise. But unfortunately, those inequities exist, and we have other schools that can easily raise \$20,000 or \$40,000 a year and pay for all kinds of additional programs and supports for parents. That's really what this is about.

But I think it makes a really crucial point, and it ties into what the member for York South–Weston talked about, which is that we really fundamentally, in order to address the issues which this bill purports to try to solve, have to deal with the funding issues in our education system once and for all. We've been talking about it for 20 years. It's time to change the funding formula in Ontario once and for all.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I now return to the member from Kitchener Centre for her two-minute summation.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I would like to say thank you to everybody for providing comments, feedback and thoughts about my debate. I think there are two big things that I just want to end with.

One is that there is often a difference between how on one side of the House we talk about the need to support parents and on our side of the House we talk about the need to support children. I just wanted to make it clear that so many of us live intersectional identities. For instance, if we're going to actually support parents, we also need to support teachers, because many teachers are parents, right? It's not so easy to separate out the different people who we're trying to support, and I think that's why it's important to go back to the root causes, to see how we can

move forward in unity and do something positive in this world.

The other piece that I just want to make sure that we don't miss in the mix of talking about math scores and such is that this is about life and death. We're no longer talking about crumbling schools and infrastructure, which was already problematic; we're actually talking about whether or not a child will survive being abused. If they are abused and they aren't taught about consent and they're not given somebody like a child advocate—an advocate, not a complaints area, but an advocate to be able to say, “I think there's something wrong here,” and then that person can take that concern forward—that child will die. You might think that that's making big, grandiose claims, but the stats prove otherwise.

I think it's super important for us to remember that this is no longer a little legislation about infrastructure; we are talking about lives: trans lives, queer lives, children's lives.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 48. For those who might be watching and have joined us late, it's An Act to amend various Acts in relation to education and child care. Speaker, I wanted to commend the Minister of Education, her chief of staff and the deputy minister of the ministry for their work on Bill 48.

Many in this Legislature—including yourself, Speaker—were here in the last sitting. During the last sitting I had the privilege to be the official opposition critic for education, and one of the first things I did during that period was, rather than sitting in my office at Queen's Park, I went out and travelled across the province, and visited with a cross-section of sectors: educators, education workers, parents and students. Out of that process, it helped us going forward to understand what the needs were across those sectors, but also some of the solutions that were available.

Coming out of that process, what's clear is that the health, safety and well-being of children and students are collectively the number one priority of this government. That's why we're taking action now—not in isolation; we're continuing that engagement process across all sectors—action that will make our schools and early years and child care settings safer.

1420

Parents and education workers must have the confidence that the government is working to keep our children safe. Through the introduction of the proposed changes we're sending a very clear message that the government has zero tolerance for the sexual abuse of Ontario students and children. We're taking action now to make sure our schools and early years and child care settings are safe learning environments.

Now, as a father of an education worker in the Durham Catholic school system and two grandchildren who attend the Durham Catholic school system, just like any other parent and grandparent across this province, that's what I would like to have. If passed, the amendments proposed to

the Ontario College of Teachers and the College of Early Childhood Educators will require that a member's certificate of registration be revoked when that member is found guilty of an act of professional misconduct consisting of, or including, specified acts of sexual abuse of a student or child, or a prohibitive act involving child pornography.

Not surprisingly, this proposed approach has won support from the College of Early Childhood Educators. Beth Deazeley, who, as you know, Speaker, is the registrar and CEO, had this to say: “The government has made a clear statement that there is no tolerance for professionals who sexually abuse children.... We are pleased that this government shares our commitment to the safety and well-being of children and has taken action. We look forward to continuing to work together in this area of shared responsibility.” Speaker, it is shared.

I alluded earlier in my introduction to the extent and breadth of our engagement across all sectors. That's a critical part of where we are today. It is broad, it is complete and ongoing.

In addition, pursuant to the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, teachers and early childhood educators whose certificates have been revoked and not reinstated will be prohibited from providing child care in Ontario. We're keeping our children safe. The mandatory revocation of an educator's certificate of registration will mean that the person cannot practise the profession for at least five years.

Not only is the government tightening the penalties; it's also ensuring the implementation of a program to provide funding for therapy, as we should, and counselling for individuals who allege that they were victims of sexual abuse. The statutory amendments will allow the recovery of therapy payment from a member found guilty of misconduct.

The Ontario College of Teachers has welcomed these proposed legislative changes; in particular, expanding the definition of sexual abuse to better protect Ontario students from abuse by teachers.

Meanwhile, from the outset our government has been focused on getting back to basics with math in Ontario. Our government recognizes that there is more work necessary to improve student performance in mathematics. For example, the Education Quality and Accountability Office has published provincial-level results from its assessments, and here's what we have learned: Only 61% of those enrolled in grade 3 and assessed in 2018 actually met the provincial math standard—actually met, Speaker; of those enrolled in grade 6 in 2018, only 49% met the provincial standard—under 50%, Speaker. Let those stats settle in a bit.

Therefore, Speaker, part of our strategy to address this challenge involves helping put teachers in the best position possible for success even before they enter the classroom, like my daughter.

Earlier in the fall the government released a resource guide to support teachers, moving away from discovery math and back to more traditional methods of mathematics instruction. So the government is committed to mandating

that new teachers successfully complete a math content knowledge test before seeking their teaching registration.

The Ontario College of Teachers is supportive of and committed to ensuring that teachers receive the initial and ongoing education to prepare them to support students in all areas, including math. The college says that it looks forward to working with the government to establish mechanisms to further enhance teacher competency in mathematics.

These proposed changes are not being made in isolation. The public must always be at the forefront of every decision made by the government, including all sectors. That is why the Minister of Education, to her credit and to her staff's credit, announced that the largest education consultation in Ontario's history is now open and continues to be open until December 12.

Parents, students and educators can have their say on a number of topics, including improving performance in science, technology, engineering and math, better preparing students with needed job and life skills, and making changes to mathematics and health and physical education curriculum and technology use in the classroom.

Bill 48 also includes proposed changes to the Ontario College of Teachers council size and composition to better serve and protect the public interest in regulating Ontario's teaching profession. I heard that as I travelled the province. I heard it from a number of sectors. These changes to the governance structure are intended to ensure that the interest of parents and students are put first.

I'd like to turn now to the issue of education and disability support. Parents across the province have made it clear and education workers have made it clear that they need more clarity around the process for making requests for service animal supports in schools for their children with special needs.

The proposed changes, if passed, would support families in accessing more consistent, fair and transparent processes when making a request for service animals to accompany their children in schools. The objective of the proposed changes is to ensure that families of students with special needs experience a fair and open process when requests are made to the board that their children be able to bring a service animal to their school.

Furthermore, the changes would provide guidance on service animals to school boards when developing their own policy. Speaker, it gave me surprise that currently only 39—39—of 72 school boards in this province have policies in place to address the need for service animals in schools. Startling, isn't it—only 39.

Every family in this province should feel total support when it comes to ensuring that their child has access to a meaningful education. The minister and the staff in the Ministry of Education understand that service animals and therapy animals both provide a wide range of therapeutic, emotional and physical support for individuals.

Again, Speaker, in line with the important transparency and openness of this government, all members of the public will have an opportunity—again, as they should—to provide input on the policy directive that would be

issued to school boards. Currently, there is no directive provided by the Ministry of Education to school boards related to the use of service animals in schools.

Will there be instances of conflict? Most certainly, but families and school boards will be encouraged to work collaboratively to resolve conflicts when they arise. In the main, in my experience through the community councils and other engagement processes—if I use the two Durham boards as an example—the outcomes are always positive when you engage at that level.

As all members here know, autism spectrum disorder and autism are both general terms for a series of complex disorders. These disorders are characterized by difficulties in social interaction, verbal and non-verbal communication, and repetitive behaviours. Pets help develop nurturing behaviours and perceived confidence in younger children and reduce children's physiological arousal and behavioural distress. This might seem like a minor matter in the context of education and service animals in the classroom, but, Speaker, it isn't—not in my experience.

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Our government has pledged to be a government for all Ontarians, not just some of them. I have a sign on my desk in the chief government whip's office that says, "For the people." It doesn't say, "For some of the people." I have a very personal understanding of the needs of people living with disabilities, and anything I can do as a member of this government to make life easier for them will be a special part of the time I spend in this assembly.

The proposed regulatory and legislative changes are all being proposed to ensure that each student has access to a safe and supportive learning environment. That is the goal. These changes are not intended to add unnecessary complexity to the education system. These proposed changes will provide assurance to parents that the government is committed to ensuring that Ontario continues to have one of the best education systems in the world. They will help to make sure that students are prepared for the realities of tomorrow and the changing local economy. They deserve no less.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you very much for the debate and for a chance to speak to it. There's so much that was put into this one bill, and I kind of struggle with what I view as the seriousness—

Interjection.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Yes, it has nothing on some of the other bills. But I struggle with how to deal with something that is so clearly needed—teachers who have sexual interactions with students: Of course that shouldn't be allowed. That absolutely, fundamentally shouldn't be allowed. But then, somehow, on an equal footing is that teachers need to have math tests. To me, that just doesn't make sense, and it shouldn't be treated as a similar issue. I question even debating it at the same time. They're so truly separate.

Let's be very clear: Asking teachers to do a math test is an attack on teachers. They are some of the hardest-

working people. They have made do with less for years and years and years of cuts, and I expect that they'll be asked to make do with less once again as we come up to the negotiations that are going to come forward.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know how to reconcile those two things in my mind; I really don't. I think that we need to take our jobs very seriously. When we talk about education, we need to talk about the bigger issues, and that is the lack of funding and the need to fix the funding formula. Fundamentally, the underperformance of our schools—underneath it all is a broken funding formula. It was broken when it was written, it continues to be broken, but it seems to be the one thing that this government doesn't actually want to talk about.

Let's look at the funding formula. Let's go back to basics. Let's go back to scratch and build something up that truly supports our students and supports our educators, and make sure that we have the best-educated population in the country. I know we can do that, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jill Dunlop: As the mother of three daughters—one who is still in secondary school—I know how crucial it is for parents to have the confidence in knowing that when their children walk into their schools and classrooms, they are feeling safe and supported. For parents, their top priority is their child's health, safety and well-being, and as my colleague from Whitby reiterated, it is also our government's number one priority.

With Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, 2018, we are working to provide more confidence to parents that their government is committed to keeping their children safe. It is imperative that we close the huge gaps in Ontario's education system in order to ensure our children and youth are learning in environments that can be protected and keep them safe.

I am certain that if you ask any parent across our province about what level of tolerance we should have when it comes to any form of sexual abuse towards children, the resounding answer would be zero. Well, up until now, the law in Ontario has instructed that a teacher lose their licence only for committing the most heinous types of sexual acts. If an act occurs outside that definition, the law doesn't mandate the Ontario College of Teachers revoke the offender's licence. As a parent, I find this incredibly troublesome.

The previous government said they would fix these gaping holes in legislation, but they fell short. The changes our government is proposing should have been instituted a long time ago.

If a teaching professional is caught sending inappropriate messages or tries to engage in inappropriate conduct with students, they do not deserve a slap on the wrist; they need to go. They don't belong in our classrooms and they should not be around children and youth, period.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Un peu comme mon collègue à côté de moi, je suis un peu perplexe quand on regarde le

projet de loi et on dit qu'on traite avec le problème mathématique et puis des problèmes d'agression sexuelle. Je ne pense pas qu'il y ait une personne ici dans la Chambre qui croit qu'un professeur qui fait l'abus sexuel sur un étudiant est acceptable, qu'il ne devrait pas perdre sa licence. Il devrait perdre sa licence et puis il ne devrait pas être dans le métier. C'est déplorable que ça soit accepté.

Mais aussi, j'ai regardé le projet de loi, et puis on veut que le projet de loi adresse les professeurs qui prennent des cours de mathématiques ou qui se perfectionnent dans les mathématiques. Puis, du même temps, on enlève le programme pour qu'ils puissent se perfectionner en mathématiques. C'est pas parler des deux coins de la bouche, ça? On dit, « Il faut que vous vous perfectionniez, mais on enlève le programme pour vous perfectionner. »

Mais le plus gros problème, ce n'est pas les maths ou d'autres choses. C'est que le système est brisé. On a un système où les classes sont trop grandes. Il y a trop d'élèves pour un professeur. C'est certain que si les classes sont trop grosses, la qualité va diminuer.

Il n'y a pas assez de ressources pour les enfants en difficulté. Je comprends le système. Ma fille et ma femme sont dans le système pour les enfants en difficulté. Mes enfants sont passés à travers ce processus-là.

Monsieur le Président, je suis ici puis je suis après repasser à travers le projet de loi. Ça me laisse perplexe quand on traite avec des sujets comme ça quand le vrai problème est un manque de financement pour réduire les problèmes qu'ont les écoles. C'est tout relié au financement que le gouvernement cherche à ne pas regarder ou reconnaître.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kaled Rasheed: I just want to make one thing very clear here: This government is not blindly making suggestions regarding the future or our children.

Recently, we embarked on the largest province-wide consultation in the history of this province to engage parents and the people of Ontario on reforming our publicly funded education system. We have used many avenues in gathering this information. On the online survey, the public was able to provide feedback on seven very important streams: science, technology, engineering and math, life skills, job skills, financial literacy, and the health and physical education curriculum. We have an "other" category as well to capture anything else that is important to the public.

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The second avenue used is the open submission platform, which allows responders—individuals or groups—to go into more detail on topics that they might have a strong opinion on.

The third avenue the public can use to participate in our consultations is telephone town halls, which are open discussions which allow analysts to hear the perspectives of responders. Ideas are shared in a live format.

The people of Ontario want to be engaged. I am pleased to share with everyone that these consultations will continue until December 15.

Again, since the day we took office, our government has been focused on ensuring that our education system accomplishes two goals: respecting parents and ensuring that our children are prepared for a bright future. Bill 48 is a move in the right direction.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Are we going over here? We're going back for the two-minute summation. You're throwing me off.

The member for Whitby has two minutes to summarize what he has heard in questions and comments.

Mr. Lorne Coe: That was a good attempt, though. It was good. It was well-meaning, to participate in the debate.

I want to thank all the members, including from the government and from the official opposition, in providing their comments in both official languages. I didn't put my earpiece in because I'm from Montreal and am bilingual. I enjoyed the comments that each made.

I spoke about my time as the official opposition critic for education, advanced education and skills development, and I just sat not too far back from one of the speakers, to the right. I spoke about the level of engagement, Speaker, that I undertook across the province. That level of engagement, as you would anticipate and others in this assembly would anticipate, is ongoing. It really never stops, does it, as an MPP, on a topic that's so meaningful to education workers and so meaningful to students in making the type of impact that I'm sure we all have a desire to do.

I talked about health and safety and the well-being of children and students, collectively, being the number one priority of this government. That's why we are taking the action now. That's what is underpinning the very fabric of this legislation.

But underscoring all that—and this is really an important aspect—is that there's a continuum of the outreach to all the sectors that have a vested interest in what I just described. That's a good thing, because the best legislation that I've seen is when you take the care and due diligence to do that. That's exactly what we are doing with the leadership of the Minister of Education, her chief of staff, her staff, the deputy minister and the ministry. It's a good piece of legislation—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you.

Further debate? Now the member from Toronto Centre gets up to 20 minutes, instead of two minutes, to carry on the debate this afternoon.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Thank you, Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in the Legislature today to speak to Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Schools Act. Before I begin my debate, I'd like to recognize that we are currently marking Transgender Awareness Week and that tomorrow is the Transgender Day of Remembrance here in Ontario. I know that I will be joining several of my colleagues at a flag-raising ceremony tomorrow here at the Legislature, and

I'll also be attending a trans day of remembrance event at the 519 community centre in the Church and Wellesley Village tomorrow evening. If any of my colleagues are available, I'd kindly welcome you to join us at 2 p.m. tomorrow at the flagpole here at the Legislature—that event is being hosted by the Toronto Trans Alliance—and as well to join us at the 519 community centre from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. It's just a short walk from the Legislature, maybe about 15 minutes over to the Church and Wellesley Village, so please do join us.

Speaker, I'd like to note that as I speak today, it will be every single trans student in Ontario that I hold front and centre in my heart as we debate this bill because, quite frankly, it's time that we put trans students first when we are talking about how to make our schools more safe and more supportive. We know that trans youth experience bullying, harassment, violence and suicide at rates much higher when compared to their cisgender peers.

Quite frankly, if we aren't looking at how our legislation impacts the most marginalized students in our province, then we're not doing our jobs.

The title of this bill is “creating safe and supportive schools.” In the spirit of that, I'd like to share some data that paints a truly heartbreaking picture of the reality that trans students in Ontario are facing every single day.

In 2011, Egale Canada, a national organization based in my riding of Toronto Centre, conducted the first-ever national climate survey on homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in Canadian schools. The results, while perhaps not shocking to anyone familiar with the issues, barriers and continued oppression that the trans folks in our communities are facing, should still be horrifying to every member of this Legislature. The report found that 74% of trans students reported being verbally harassed about their gender identity; 37% of trans youth reported being physically harassed because of their gender expression; and 49% of trans youth—half—reported experiencing sexual harassment in school in the last year. It gets worse. The report also found that 90% of trans youth hear transphobic comments daily or weekly from other students, and almost a quarter hear transphobic comments from their teachers daily or weekly.

The consequences of this disproportionate amount of bullying, harassment and transphobia levelled against trans students in our province is heartbreaking. The Trans Pulse Project, a community-based research project investigating the impact of social exclusion and discrimination on the health of trans people in Ontario, found that 47%—half—of trans youth in this province have seriously considered suicide in the past year.

We must do better to make our schools safe for trans youth, who, as I've stated, are disproportionately affected by bullying, harassment, violence and suicide when compared to their cisgender peers, which brings me to what is and what is not in this legislation and how the stated intent of this bill—to make our schools safe and supportive for all students—is contradictory to actions that this government has already taken to make our schools less safe and less supportive for students, particularly LGBTQ

students and, more specifically, trans students and trans students of colour.

I'm sure my colleagues have figured where I'm going with this. If this government truly cared about trans students, if this government truly cared about making our schools more safe and more supportive, it wouldn't have rolled back our sex ed curriculum and there would be provisions within this bill to bolster supports for trans students and to modernize the health and physical education curriculum.

Nobody on this side of the bench disagrees that teachers who have engaged in any kind of sexual conduct with students should have their licences taken away—but there's a bare baseline compared to what needs to be done and the investments that need to be made to actually make our schools safe.

And it does seem pretty clear to me that this Conservative government does not care about trans youth.

Ontario students have a right to learn about consent. They have a right to learn about gender identity. They have a right to learn about gender expression. Trans students have a right to see themselves reflected in our curriculum. They have a right to have their identities affirmed and recognized. They have a right to go to a school where kids are taught how not to bully and how not to make and say transphobic and homophobic comments to their peers, and a right to go to a school where their teachers know how to recognize transphobic bullying and not only stop it but, as I mentioned in the statistics I shared earlier, not make transphobic comments themselves in the classrooms.

Our schools will never be safe or supportive or carry out the written intent of this bill without a modern sex ed curriculum that prioritizes the experiences of trans students and is inclusive of the gender identity, gender expression and consent.

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This has become such a significant danger to trans students in Ontario that two 15-year-old trans students in Toronto have filed a human rights claim against this government for harm caused as a direct result of the curriculum changes.

Speaker, I'd like to read into the record some comments made in a CBC article from September 17 as it relates to this case and to the safety of our schools:

"Two Toronto transgender high school students have filed separate human rights claims against the province because they say the new interim sexual education curriculum discriminates against all LGBT students in Ontario....

"The pair want the 2015 curriculum to remain in place for this school year and they want any future sex ed curriculum to comply with the Ontario Human Rights Code.

"They also want the tribunal to declare that comments made by Ontario Education Minister Lisa Thompson, and her officials, about the curriculum change, as well as the creation of a 'snitch line' teacher reporting website, are contrary to the code....

"... the minister either fully or substantially removed all content from the elementary curriculum regarding gay,

lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirited identities and issues,' the claims read."

The Minister of Education has "excluded all content regarding gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, same-sex families, negotiating consent to sexual activity, invisible disabilities, HIV and the impacts of HIV stigma, and online safety from the mandatory learning expectations,' the claims read."

This ties into the next point that I'd like to make, which is about something that actually is in the bill, and that's the punitive provisions for teachers who commit sexual misconduct against students—which, of course, I'm not here to argue against. Educators who commit sexual assault have no place in our school system—full stop. But I have to say that if the goal is to eliminate sexual assault and sexual harassment in our schools, this government is approaching this completely backwards. Focusing on punishment after the fact instead of prevention before the fact will not eliminate sexual violence from our schools.

Eradicating sexual violence and truly eliminating it from our education system so that kids can indeed go to school in safe and supportive classrooms means actually educating children about consent, about the autonomy that they have over their bodies, and about how to name their body parts, so that if they are experiencing abuse, they have the actual words to say what is happening to them.

So on one hand, we have a government that, through this bill, is proposing more strict, punitive measures for teachers who have committed these offences—which, again, I don't disagree with—but on the other hand, you've eliminated the very curriculum that gives students the knowledge to know that any abuse they are experiencing might be wrong and how to report it. It's so counter-intuitive, it's mind-boggling.

I'm not alone in recognizing just how dangerous this is. In August, 1,800 health care professionals signed a petition opposing the rollback of the health and physical education curriculum on the grounds that it jeopardized the health and well-being of children in Ontario.

Dr. Andrea Chittle, a family physician from Guelph who was here at Queen's Park, said:

"Reverting back to the 1998 curriculum is an affront to the youth of Ontario....

"It is imperative that children learn about difference and inclusivity, consent and safety. The human development and sexual health components of the 2015 curriculum are critically important for informed decision-making related to healthy behaviours and relationships....

"Ontario's children deserve a current, complete and evidence-based curriculum."

The petition was signed by the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario; the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada; the Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario; the Association of Ontario Midwives; Canadian Women in Medicine; the Ontario Association of Social Workers; the Ontario Medical Students Association; and Planned Parenthood.

At the same time, 26 school boards in this province including those in Toronto, Peel, York and Halton regions,

Hamilton-Wentworth and Ottawa-Carleton, spoke out against reverting to the 1998 curriculum.

The experts and the evidence are clear: Modern sex ed saves lives and gives students the power and the knowledge that they need to keep themselves safe. Punitive measures against offenders after the fact, and as the only approach, do little to prevent violence against students from actually happening in the first place.

It's not just the experts who have been clear on this point; it's students and parents too. As many members here will be aware, countless parents have written to us to ask for clarification on the government's rollback of the health and physical education curriculum, and to speak up in support of a curriculum that protects their children from harm. Parents and students have been organizing against the move, and Queen's Park has been host to multiple rallies. This of course culminated in a historic student walkout on September 21, where over 50,000 students demonstrated against the repeal of the health and physical education curriculum and the cancellation of the Indigenous curriculum-writing sessions.

One of the students who walked out had this to say to CTV News: "I think it's really important for people to see how important this is to us as students because we are the ones who ultimately suffer from this change."

In their statement on the rally, the student organizers wrote, "It's time for all students to stand up and fight for our right to education. We the students will walk out, protest, and demand the reinstatement of the 2015 sex ed curriculum and re-establishment of the Indigenous curriculum rewrite. We the students will not stop. We will not relent. Not until we win this fight."

It's not just high schoolers who are raising their voices. I'd also like to share a story of a young trans boy in my riding of Toronto Centre. Leo is eight years old and shared this letter with me about the rollback of the sex ed curriculum. It reads, "I am a trans boy. I think this is not fair to queer people and especially to trans people! I don't even like that trans identity is not going to be allowed to [be talked] about at school! I think it is very discriminatory! I need teachers to talk about trans stuff! Do you really want to be a government who does not keep me safe? Huh? Do you? Well, I really don't think so. You gotta change this up."

Again, that was from Leo in my riding. Leo is eight, and he seems to understand this issue much more thoroughly than the government seems to.

The Parry Sound North Star put it this way in an editorial, saying that youth "need to know ... so they have a full understanding that the force of the law is behind them whenever anyone wants to touch them or commit any sexual act upon them. That includes family members, coaches, leaders at church and everyone everywhere."

Mr. Lorne Coe: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member has raised a point of order.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Speaker, there are three specific sections, as you know, of Bill 48. I have been listening

carefully to the presentation and I haven't heard one touched on yet. I'll leave that to your guidance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. I'll return to the member from Toronto Centre to continue her debate.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Speaker, the duty of this government and of this bill is to protect the public interest. While I feel some aspects of the bill are able to fulfill that, it falls woefully short.

I would like to share some emails that I received from my constituents just this past weekend. One, from Connie, reads, "I am writing simply to address my outright disgust with the Premier's efforts to remove any discussion of gender identity and trans people from their sex education. This is a very personal issue for me as I can see the effect it has had ... via the adults around me who either are trans or do not fit into the gender binary. The way that they immediately fear how far these motivations will go, now with the knowledge that their Premier does not even believe they exist. The fear is there, and it breaks my heart to see. Not to mention the harm that it will do to LGBT+ youth who do not have any resources to affirm or help them throughout their development. The attempt to erase any support for LGBT youth is disgusting. Students with bigoted parents need to have a space where they feel they can learn and be safe."

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"Personally I feel this includes information such as gender identity and discussion of different sexual identities. Quite simply, it would have helped me out earlier in life if my education at the time included any sort of mention of queer people. It would have made my life so much easier, as there always felt like there was something different about myself that I could not pinpoint.

"I was proud to say that Ontario had stepped up and improved their curriculum after I had left school. But now, with all the backtracking and reversals I can no longer feel this way. It is worrisome that the government ignores such a large population that they are supposed to protect. Trans rights are human rights. LGBT+ youth matter. People of varying genders exist whether the Premier cares to acknowledge it or not.

"I fear the road our province is going down. I fear for the safety of my loved ones.

"I urge you, as my MPP, to fight against this."

I have another email, from a constituent named Julia. It reads, "As a transgender woman I know that gender identity theory is very real and is a widely accepted scientific theory throughout the medical and psychological communities and is even accepted by the UN and WHO.

"In addition to being a trans woman, I also have two young children, ages three and one and a half, who will soon be entering the Ontario public school system.

"I am worried how my children will be perceived by their classmates. Not only do they have two moms; one is transgender. I know there is great risk of them being bullied and teased, and I can only hope that I have provided them with the ability to hold their heads high and be proud of who they and their family are. When gender

identity was being taught in school, I was comforted to know my children would learn that people like their mother exist and that it is perfectly fine to be from a family that is different. Given that the sexual education curriculum has already been repealed to remove topics of gender identity, I worry for my children when they enter school and those children out there who do not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth.

“When I was in school, there was no sexual education curriculum that discussed gender identity, and gender identity seemed to only be discussed on daytime talk shows seeing if you can guess if the person was really a ‘man’ or a ‘woman.’ Because of this, and my struggle with gender identity, I was ashamed of who I am. It forced me to repress my feelings and spiral into a deep depression several times that almost resulted in me taking my own life. It is only through my gender transition and the recent general acceptance of trans people that I have finally been able to live a happy life where I am not hiding who I am. If gender identity had been taught in school, I can only imagine how much suffering I could have been saved.”

Again, that was from a constituent in my riding.

Speaker, I would like to end on a note of hope and optimism in what feels like a very bleak time, especially after some of the stories that I have just shared. In our province, we can do better. All kids, and especially trans kids, deserve safe and supportive schools. It takes political will and the right priorities to fix the funding formula to allow for better investment in our children’s future. Our children deserve to feel represented in the curriculum, and they deserve to feel safe in their classrooms.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to get up and rise on this. I also thank the member for her comments. I’ll say this: I can appreciate that the member has brought a singular focus. At the beginning of the debate, she mentioned that she was going to bring a singular focus to her comments, and I applaud her for that. There’s lots of opportunities to debate and get into some of the larger issues.

I think where sometimes the opposition, in particular the NDP, start to lose me when I’m listening to some of their comments is the suggestion that this side of the House doesn’t care about people. I think in her comments she said that we don’t care about trans youth. Well, that’s obviously not correct. We care about all of our students. What we try to do when we create legislation is not focus on certain groups, but all Ontarians. All Ontario students deserve to be protected, and I know the members opposite agree with that. She said it in her statement. I really want to reiterate this point, because that’s what the debate seems to have come down to more often than not in this place: that somehow this side of the House doesn’t care about certain people, and it’s just simply not true. We all have the same groups of people in our riding. We all have members of our extended families and friends who suffer the exact same things that you talked about in your speech. Some of the reasons why we have come to this place, some

of the reasons why we’re fighting, some of the reasons why this legislation has been brought forward by the minister is to focus on that.

Yes, we’ve made some changes to the curriculum. But as a teacher told us, a curriculum should bring people together, not force them apart. So there is opportunity to advise and get more comment on that, but I’d ask the member again—and all of the members opposite—to focus their comments more on what we can do to unify Ontarians and not split them apart, because this side of the House cares for the exact same—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Ms. Marit Stiles: I want to, first of all, thank the member from Toronto Centre for her really thoughtful comments on the legislation. I wanted to respond to some of the comments opposite throughout, in the midst of, her debate, about whether or not these comments—and how these comments—that she made relate to the legislation that we’re discussing. It bothers me a lot, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite can’t seem to make that connection between what is, for example, as the member said, prevention and what is punishment. We want to talk about prevention. We appreciate that there needs to be a conversation about punishment, and we’ve said that many, many times. But we also believe that prevention has to be discussed and should be a part of this bill. It should be a part of this bill. We cannot talk about preventing bullying or abuse unless we give students—children—the tools that they need.

I also want to respond to something one of the members opposite shouted out during the member’s speech, which was that we have an agenda. I think the member opposite just mentioned this again, in a similar vein. I don’t disagree that we want to keep kids safe and supported. But I do think that there is a disconnect. If this government truly wants to protect queer kids, trans kids, kids who identify differently, as the member opposite just said, then they need to go forward, not backward, with the sexual education curriculum. If you want to avoid those divides, you need to send a very clear message right now, right here, to trans kids in particular, that says: “We love you. We support you. We acknowledge you.”

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I’d like to add my comments on the member from Toronto Centre—to come back to Bill 48.

I have a question for everybody here: What’s seven times eight?

Interjection: Fifty-six.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I’ve got an answer—okay, 56.

A buddy of mine is an ironworker. Whenever we run into usually a young guy, he always asks, “What’s seven times eight?” He trains ironworkers. He needs the best. The union needs the best. They’ve got to have the best to attract employment for the success of the union. Hence, Bill 48 will require math testing for new teachers. And why do we do that? Well, over the last five years, as we know, math test scores have been declining. In spite of

efforts by the previous government, the trend has not reversed.

To begin to increase math scores, those who teach math need a more solid understanding of the field themselves, so Bill 48 requires new teachers pass a math test before you get a licence to teach. Mathematics is paramount for employment, not only as an ironworker, obviously—as a boilermaker or as a pipe fitter. Friends of mine in the field talk about this a lot.

Of course, in what's referred to as the STEM field—science, technology, engineering, mathematics—again, look at the numbers. People in that field make on average \$75,000 a year. In the non-STEM field—arts, social science—you're looking at maybe \$58,000, if you're entry-level, aged 25 to 34.

Also, there's very high demand for those in the STEM fields—a field based on a solid understanding of mathematics.

One other bonus: It helps you balance a chequebook—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you.

Further questions and comments on bill “six times eight is 48”?

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Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: What just happened in the last two sets of comments is exactly what our side of the House has discussed. The connection between what my colleague was discussing and the bill was that the bill focuses on talking about what happens when you have been charged with sexual misconduct and what we will do as a consequence, versus prevention. In answer to the prevention piece, we're now talking about a math test. That is a much bigger disconnect, in my opinion, than the actual disconnect that they were trying to say was happening with my colleague.

I just wanted to stand up and express one thing: The best part of what I heard in my colleagues' address to this bill is how dangerous what is happening here is. What I do know is that if I want to build something that is safe, I have to be able to support the most marginalized in order to protect all Ontarians. Essentially, all we've been trying to explain is stories of the experiences of the most marginalized. Some 90% of trans-identified students have heard transphobic comments in school, and one quarter of those transphobic comments are coming from their teachers—that is the most marginalized. If I want to build an educational system that is actually going to help every single Ontarian—all lives matter—then I have to make sure that I actually support the most marginalized. Black lives matter.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'll return to the member from Toronto Centre for her two-minute summation.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Thank you, Speaker. I would first like to thank the members from Markham–Stouffville, Davenport, Haldimand–Norfolk and Kitchener Centre for their comments.

As I previously mentioned, I'd like to remind everyone again that tomorrow is Trans Day of Remembrance, and

encourage all of my fellow MPPs on both sides of the aisle to attend the flag-raising here at Queen's Park at 2 p.m., or as well to join in the community ceremony at the 519 community centre at Church and Wellesley tomorrow evening.

Just in reply to a few of the comments that were made: Again, I agree with the idea of revoking licences from teachers who have sexually assaulted students. I think it's a necessary step to take. Similarly, guidelines around working animals in classrooms are welcome. But what you've done is, you've taken a couple of good ideas, you've smashed them into a bill, and then you've gone in a completely different direction with your non-legislative policy that doesn't give children in our schools the ability to actually stay safe.

What's missing in this bill, Speaker, is a systemic approach to change, both at a policy level and at a funding level, that's going to keep kids, especially trans kids, safe at school. That can't happen with the targeted erasure of trans students and their experiences and their identities from our curriculum.

To the member from Markham–Stouffville: If your caucus truly cares about trans kids, then walk your walk. You have the power. You are on the government side of the bench. You have the power to put a curriculum in place that affirms trans identities and makes those kids feel safe and included in their schools. You have that ability. You can do it; trust me. So what I'm calling on you to do today is to affirm the existence and the identity of trans students and make them safe at school. This bill does not do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: I'm actually going to focus on the bill, which is the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act. But before I speak on the actual bill, I would like to thank our minister for all her incredible hard work in bringing this bill forward, and making sure that our future generations are safe and secure. Thank you, Minister, for that.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand in the House today and speak in support of the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, which would, if passed, make important amendments to the Ontario College of Teachers Act, the Early Childhood Educators Act, the Teaching Profession Act as well as the Education Act. This bill, if passed, will ensure safe and supportive classrooms throughout Ontario.

There are three major legislative changes proposed in this bill. The government is working hard to protect the health and safety of our youth and children—our most vulnerable population. The government has taken a zero-tolerance position for sexual abuse of Ontario's students and children by members of the Ontario College of Teachers and the College of Early Childhood Educators, and supporting our children and youth in successfully preparing for a bright future.

Mr. Speaker, we promise to get back to the basics, working on ways to put our publicly funded education system back on track. We have identified two areas that will do that. First, we will be addressing the gaps in the

current delivery of our mathematics program in our school system. Second, we propose to enhance the life of students with special needs across our province by introducing legislation where there is none with regard to the assistance of service animals in school environments. This is Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act. This piece of legislation will serve to enhance our students with special needs' educational experience, setting them up for success in their future aspirations.

The government is taking action to ensure that our schools' early years and child care settings are safe for our children and youth by requiring that the discipline committees of the Ontario College of Teachers and the College of Early Childhood Educators revoke an educator's certificate for committing any act of sexual abuse of a student or child where the discipline committees of the colleges have found the educators guilty of such acts.

We are also going to provide regulation-making authority of the Lieutenant Governor in Council to prescribe other acts of a sexual nature prohibited under the Criminal Code that would result in the mandatory removal of an educator's certificate.

Earlier this spring, the Ontario College of Teachers began their governance review. Based on the outcome of the review, Mr. Speaker, we will propose amendments relating to the council which would allow the government to introduce changes that could better serve and protect the public interest in regulating Ontario's teaching profession.

By moving forward with the changes proposed in Bill 48, we are delivering a clear message that the health, safety and well-being of children and students in this great province is our number one priority.

The previous government did not go far enough. They did not do everything in their legislative power to ensure that students and children are able to learn in an environment in which they feel safe. Under the previous government's role, a case surfaced where a teacher had pleaded guilty to psychological and sexual abuse of a student, but this teacher's licence was not revoked. This teacher was quietly moved from one school to another, leaving him to commit a similar crime in another school.

At the time of that incident, the law here in Ontario stated that the mandatory removal of a licence can only occur if the sexual abuse falls under a predetermined list of sexual activities. Surprisingly, activities such as groping or making sexual comments were not enough to ensure that a teacher never set foot in a classroom again. If the Ontario College of Teachers Act, under the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, was in place at the time, this teacher would have lost his licence.

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In addition, if the proposed amendments are passed, educators found guilty by the college's discipline committees of a prescribed sexual act that is prohibited under the Criminal Code would also be subject to mandatory revocation.

In addition, our government has announced that sections in the Ontario College of Teachers Act and the Early Childhood Educators Act will be added, requiring the

colleges to provide funding for therapy and counselling for children and students who have alleged they were the subject of sexual abuse or an act of child pornography committed by an educator in the course of the educator's practice. These sections will come into force on January 1, 2020.

Mr. Speaker, not only does our government want to protect our children and students—but cause them to grow and prosper in our technologically advancing world. Since the day we took office, our government has been focused on ensuring that our education system accomplishes two goals: respecting parents, and ensuring that our children are prepared for a bright future.

Can you imagine my shock when I found out that only half of Ontario grade 6 students meet provincial math standards and that by grade 9 more than half of applied math students are failing to make the grade? This is unacceptable.

Coming from a technology background myself, and knowing that our world is quickly moving toward a more technological environment, I and many parents understand the importance of our children being proficient in mathematics. It is a very important skill they require for their future success.

Over the next four years, 70% of job openings will place significant importance on math skills. By emphasizing mastery of these skills at an early age, we are setting our children up for success. Our proposed first step in fixing this problem is to release a teachers' guide and a parent fact sheet that emphasizes the fundamental math concepts and skills that students are expected to know in each grade in order to meet the curriculum requirements.

Since our government has taken office, we have been working on finding ways to put our publicly funded education system back on track, including raising mathematics literacy. Recently, we embarked on the largest province-wide consultation in the history of this province to engage parents and the people of Ontario on reforming our publicly funded education system. We are engaging everyone—parents, kin parents, grandparents, students, guardians, teachers and school administrators—on a wide spectrum of topics. They include financial literacy; improving math scores; engaging more people in science, technology, and engineering; and developing an age-appropriate health and physical education program.

Since we launched the consultation on September 28, the feedback has been amazing. I'm confident that the volumes of feedback that we are getting will help the government make further education reforms in the future.

We are using many avenues in gathering information in engaging our community. On the online survey, the public is able to provide feedback on seven very important streams: science, technology, engineering and math, life skills, job skills, financial literacy, and the health and physical education curriculum. We have an "other" category as well to capture anything else that is important to the public.

Mr. Speaker, we are very pleased to note that the public is taking their time and thoughtfully filling out these

surveys. The government is getting a wealth of information that will be used to inform our current recommendations and can easily be used in the future.

The second avenue the public can use to participate in our consultation is the open submission platform, which allows responders, individuals or groups to go into more detail on topics that they might have a strong opinion on. We are accepting reports and emails. They can either email it directly to us or attach it through the fortheparents.ca forum.

The third avenue the public can use to participate in our consultations is telephone town halls, which are open discussions which allow analysts to hear the perspective of responders' ideas in a live-share format—

Mr. Ian Arthur: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Kingston and the Islands has raised a point of order.

Mr. Ian Arthur: I feel like the bill is being spoken around, that we're talking about the consultations and the potential of future legislation versus the legislation that is actually in front of us right now. If we could focus on the topic, that would be great.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'll return to the member from Mississauga East—Cooksville and ask that you speak directly to the bill, please—not that you haven't been, but that you do.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The people of Ontario want to be engaged, and Bill 48 is all about safe and supportive classrooms. We are engaging the people of Ontario and I'm really proud of that, because our government would like to hear from the people directly.

I am pleased to share with everyone that these consultations will continue until December 15. Outside of the seven important streams, some of the most popular topics so far have included how to better manage the use of cellphones in the classroom and how we can better prepare students with necessary job skills and life skills.

Another area that has been identified is teaching our youth coping skills. We need to make sure that our children and students are being equipped with coping skills so that they can feel confident in dealing with a variety of situations from job interviews, performance reviews and stakeholder engagements.

Somewhere along the line over the last 15 years, we have failed our students. We have heard from our employers that our students need coping skills. They need an opportunity to develop resiliency.

As can be seen by the enriched data that is being generated, people are taking time to share what's working and what's not working within the classroom. I have every confidence that when we pull the data together in our final report, it will provide a pathway forward for years to come for the students—the pages that we have here in the House right now, their friends and their family members, as well as every other student across this province.

Again, since the day we took office, our government has been focused on ensuring that our education system

accomplishes two goals: respecting parents and ensuring that our children are prepared for a bright future.

Another positive impact that this bill, if passed, would have is on the lives of students with special needs. Across the province, we know that many Ontarians benefit from the support of service animals in many aspects of their lives. For example, guide dogs assist blind and visually impaired individuals by assisting in traffic and helping them to avoid obstacles in their paths. Other service animals may help alert people of certain medical conditions or provide support for people who use manual or power wheelchairs.

1530

We also know that some students in our province rely on the assistance of service animals in their school environment. This includes children with special education needs, such as students with autism and mental health needs. Students with special education needs may require a wide range of programs and services in order to gain meaningful access to education, which may, in some cases, also include the use of a service animal.

Research demonstrates that service dogs perform a number of so-called invisible tasks that contribute to the cognitive functioning of students with autism. Families of children with autism report that service dogs increase the social skills of their child, resulting in a reduction of tantrums and social discomfort.

Ontarians with special needs have unique gifts and are incredibly important contributors to our beautiful province. They are worthy of respect, dignity and acknowledgement, and also of assistance where possible.

Many children with special needs are being denied a safe and healthy living experience. This is due to a lack of legislative framework. Many families face barriers when requesting that a service dog or animal accompany their child at school. While the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 sets out a framework related to the use of service dogs by individuals with a disability and the Blind Persons' Rights Act sets out a framework for the use of guide dogs for individuals who are blind or have low vision, there is no legislation in Ontario that actually addresses the use of service animals in schools.

The Ministry of Education does not currently provide direction to school boards related to the use of service animals in schools. Instead, it is up to each individual school board to develop their own process for managing service animal requests. Some school boards have developed their policies related to the use of service animals in schools, while unfortunately, others have not. In fact, only 39 school boards out of 72 in Ontario have specific policies in place to address service animals in schools. These policies vary from board to board, which means there's limited consistency across the province in how these requests are treated. What we need is consistency across the board.

We have heard from students and families, Mr. Speaker, and they have told us that the process for requesting the use of service animals can be confusing and ultimately very frustrating. Our government for the people has

always been clear that we are committed to supporting parents and students in our education system.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thanks to the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville on his debate towards Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act.

There are so many things in this bill that really need the attention that they deserve. I think that lumping in math with the sexual abuse piece really doesn't do justice to how we really need to take time to talk about those topics.

But the member did also address, of course, service dogs. That's also in this bill as well. The comment he made about the cellphones in the classrooms—I think we have to remember we are a technological society now. And oftentimes, as adults, we set the behaviour of how our children treat these technical tools. There are many adults, I can tell you, who should have phone etiquette when it comes to their cellphone. We need to set that example. I know that my own daughter, for example, loves to use a cellphone, and her children watch her use that cellphone. We are saying kids need to have a certain standard in the classroom, but as adults, we also need to set that standard for ourselves and teach that to our children as well.

One of things that was also mentioned, as I said, was a service dog. That's another thing that's changing in society. Many years ago, people would never have thought of service dogs in a classroom, and now that's happening.

That's why I think it's really important—when we have these bills all lumped together, we're not giving the issue the attention that it deserves, and really making it a situation where when there are deputations, when there are presentations on these bills, that we can focus on the actual topic people come to, rather than the division of the sexual abuse versus math versus service dogs.

Though I'm glad there are some things in this bill that are good, like the service dogs and other discussions around sexual abuse, we do need to make sure that we spend the time to really get it right when we're delivering legislation to the people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I would like to begin by thanking the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for his remarks. I think he absolutely hit the nail on the head in terms of discussing the fact that the various elements inside this bill are going to have a positive impact on our students going forward.

I would be remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I didn't do something that I've done every single time I have risen to speak on education in this chamber, and that is to thank our Minister of Education, because I feel that this is such an important and critical area that we need to get right.

You know, Mr. Speaker, coming from the opposition today, I've heard a lot of passion around education, a lot of passion about how we can improve our curriculum and about some of the issues that we need to deal with. That passion certainly mimics what I'm hearing out in the public time and time again. So, my message for every

single member of the opposition is: How many of you have gone to fortheparents.ca and taken part in the consultation? Because we need to make sure that every single person who feels passionately about this issue and feels passionately about the future of our children is taking part in this consultation that has already been participated in by thousands of Ontarians across the province, including many in my home constituency.

Mr. Speaker, I've been hosting round tables on financial literacy, civic education, special needs education, and on how we can get the trades back in our schools. People are genuinely excited about the opportunity to improve our education system.

I think we need to stop looking at some of the negative aspects around this and look at how we are going to build a better future. That's what this bill is doing. That's what this consultation is doing, and I'm thrilled to be part of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ian Arthur: It's a pleasure to stand up and say thank you to everyone who has contributed to the debate so far.

I just want to once again draw attention to the issue of putting things that are as important as teachers who commit sexual acts against students in the same bill as requiring teachers to do a math test. The point is that schools have been underfunded for too long. We have huge class sizes. We have crumbling infrastructure with education. That needs to be addressed. That needs to be where the priority is in that area.

If they want to bring special needs dogs into the classroom—I want to talk about that a little bit. Service dogs in the classroom: I think that's a good thing, but I think what they really need in the classroom is the in-classroom supports for children with special needs, the very supports that were cut by the ideological predecessor to this government, the Harris government. It used to be that there would be one teacher and three educational assistants in a special needs class, and then those were integrated into the general classrooms. From that, we have seen escalating violence in the classrooms. We have teachers who can't manage to do what they are being asked to do because they simply don't have the supports to get it done. That's the fundamental issue.

1540

So yes, having service dogs: I think that's a great thing in classrooms. That's a step in the right direction. I think fixing the real problem would be a much better solution, and that's bringing those supports back in so that teachers have what they need to deliver high-quality education.

The students need it, too. I hear so much from the government speaking about what the students need and making education better for them. They need the support, and they need the support from the ground up. That starts with funding teachers, funding educational assistants and making sure the resources are there from the ground up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, it's an honour to stand here. This particular bill addresses three elements: one, the

Early Childhood Education Act; the second one pertaining to the Education Act; and the third, the Ontario College of Teachers Act. There are a number of various components in there, of which professional misconduct is one, but mathematics is yet something else in here as well.

I hear the NDP talking about, “Well, how does mathematics fit into this?” We have to remember a few things here. First of all, the health and safety and well-being of our children is first and foremost. That’s the number one priority for our government and what we want for the people of this province. We have that zero tolerance for sexual abuse of Ontario students and children, and that’s all students in our province. We’re taking action now to make our schools and early child years safe for our students.

I want to address something with regard to mathematics. When I was back in school, I loved math. I really enjoyed it. Back in our day, Speaker, we had to learn our times tables. We knew what seven times eight was. I know that you know what the answer is there; it’s 56. I know you knew that.

Do you know what? When is it a good time to introduce a better way of doing math? Now is the time. It truly is. I remember, when I was a young kid—you’re from Windsor–Tecumseh, Speaker, and I used to deliver the Windsor Star back in the great riding of Chatham–Kent. Of course, I had one of those change counters on my hip. I had to learn how to do change. I could do math in my head. I can do adding, subtracting, multiplying, dividing and do percentages in my head. The kids today can’t do that, and they need to learn that.

We’re getting back to the basics, back to the fundamentals, but in order to do that, our teachers need to know how to do that as well. So when I hear the NDP ranting, all I have to say is: You’re so negative that you probably take a bacterial count on the milk of human kindness.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We’ll return to the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for his two-minute summation.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to all the members who spoke their comments and everything.

Eight times nine is 72. That’s how I learned as well, too. I just wanted to make that point.

Also, Mr. Speaker, it’s not about the use of cellphones in the classroom; it’s about the fact that when the teacher is teaching, we should be focusing on what that individual is teaching rather than us working on our cellphones. I think that is extremely important. It’s very disrespectful to our teachers who are teaching us when we are focusing on our cellphones. I think this is something that’s concerning as well.

The protection of the health and safety of our children is central to the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, Mr. Speaker. Our government has taken a zero-tolerance position for sexual abuse of Ontario students and children by members of the Ontario College of Teachers and the College of Early Childhood Educators.

Not only are we putting into place legislation to protect our children, but also giving them the supports they

require to heal once victimized. Not only does our government want to protect our children and students but to cause them to grow and prosper in our technologically advancing world. We will accomplish this by making changes to the Ontario College of Teachers council size. These changes of the governance structure are intended to ensure that the interests of parents and students are put first. Mr. Speaker, our government for the people is protecting and nurturing our most valuable asset—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to add a few words on the record about Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act. I would like to begin by putting on the record a letter that I received from the Rainbow District School Board, signed by their chair, Mrs. Doreen Dewar. It starts as follows:

“Lisa Thompson

“Minister of Education

“Legislative Building....

“Dear Minister Thompson:

“At the regular meeting of Rainbow District School Board on October 23, 2018, trustees expressed deep disappointment that Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grants may be cancelled.

“The following motion was approved:

““Motion: 18-R131, J. Hunda/D. Morrison

““That RDSB write a letter to the ministry, with copies to MPPs, regarding the positive impact of the Parents Reaching Out (PRO) Grants and the negative effects of any decision to discontinue.” It was carried.

“PRO grants have a direct impact on student learning, whether focusing on math or mental health. Over the years, these grants have given our schools and our school councils the opportunity to invite parents/guardians and the community to participate in hands-on activities. The attached news release provides a summary of grants received in the 2017-2018 school year.

“In addition, PRO regional grants allowed the Rainbow District School Board parent involvement committee (PIC) to bring parents/guardians from all of our schools together. Just this past spring, PIC hosted a conference for parents by parents with a focus on mental health, equity and inclusion. In previous years, grants enabled us to produce literacy tip sheets, math tips sheets, a series of mental health brochures, information on growth mindset and resources for a board-wide transition evening. These resources remain on our website for all to access.” And they are still there, if you want to go.

“The province of Ontario recently launched public consultations. The invitation for feedback tells us that you value parental input and want to actively engage all partners in education in the learning process. PRO grants engage at the grassroots level, the level closest to students. We urge you to continue to offer our school councils and parent involvement committee the opportunity to access these funds. They are a solid investment.

“Sincerely....”

And it is signed.

I wanted to put on the record some of those activities that took place in and around my riding. The Rainbow had put out a news release that said, "Rainbow Schools Receive Grants to Enhance Parent Involvement." That was last year at this time, on November 7, 2017.

"Innovative parent involvement projects are being implemented in Rainbow schools thanks to funding provided by the Ministry of Education's parent engagement office.

"Twelve Rainbow schools will share a total of \$10,900 in Parents Reaching Out Grants to support school council initiatives to further engage parents/guardians in their child's learning.

"In addition, the board has received a \$10,000 regional Parents Reaching Out Grant for the parent involvement committee to host 'Parents as Partners: Learning Together.' Parents/guardians will have an opportunity to attend various sessions. They will gain awareness of education initiatives, dig deeper into timely topics, and learn strategies they can use at home to support their child's progress in school.

"Parents are important partners in the learning process,' said Norm Blaseg, director of education for Rainbow District School Board. 'Research has shown that the involvement of parents and guardians in their child's education has a positive impact on student achievement and overall school performance.'

"While each project varies from school to school, the initiatives have one thing in common—they are intended to enhance communications between the school and the home and help to create a welcoming environment for parents/guardians.

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"We commend school councils and the parent involvement committee for hosting activities to further engage parents/guardians in Rainbow schools," added the director. "With their efforts and the support of the Ministry of Education, we have a number of exciting projects taking place in our schools once again this year."

I will put on the record a few of those activities that took place in my riding. At A.B. Ellis Public School:

"Transition to High School Event

"Students and parents ... were invited to an information session designed to help students make key decisions in the transition from elementary to secondary school."

At the Algonquin Road Public School, it was a "parent tool kit" focused on math: "Algonquin Road Public School will host an evening workshop where parents/guardians will explore activities, fact sheets, and other resources from the CODE Parent Tool Kit series 'Inspiring Your Child to Learn and Love Math.'" This has been extremely popular and useful.

At the Assiginack Public School it was called "Everyone Can Code.

"Assiginack Public School will host an evening of coding fun for parents/guardians and their children. Together, they will explore various coding applications to develop an understanding of the process. A lending library

with various coding devices and books will be available for use."

I bet you, Speaker, that if we ask, most of us here are parents, but a lot of us don't know what coding is all about. We have to learn so that we can help our children, and this is what this grant helps to do.

At Carl A. Nesbitt Public School, they had a STEAM night. That "gives students and parents/guardians the opportunity to participate in a variety of activities that integrate science, technology, engineering, arts and math. A focus on creative problem solving, with an emphasis on imagination, made for a fun-filled and educational day spent with" the whole family. Here again, a focus on math, a focus on science, technology and engineering.

Central Manitoulin Public School:

"Mental Health Resources for Students and Families.

"Posters showcasing student art will be hung around the school to promote mental health. Brochures will be developed and sent home with students. Staff will also host an information session for parents/guardians to increase awareness for supporting children inside and outside of the classroom."

We all know that supporting our children's mental health pays huge dividends. Those small investments—a \$10,000 investment—went a long way.

At Ernie Checkeris Public School, here again: "STEAM gives students and parents/guardians the opportunity to participate in ... activities," very similar to what they had done at Central Manitoulin.

At Lansdowne Public School, they had a family math fun and lending library where they hosted "a special day for families to explore the world of mathematics." They had a math games lending library that was made available to students so they could learn how to enjoy doing mathematics at home—not obvious, but they got it done. "The Family Connections Strategy will continue to offer child care and transportation to families for all school events throughout the year, in an effort to encourage family participation in student learning." It was extremely well attended.

The Lively District Secondary School:

"Empowering Our Teens Workshop.

"The School Council at Lively District Secondary School will host a Teen Empowerment Workshop for students and parent/guardians. The day of workshops will help parents/guardians take a proactive approach to help their teens navigate and alleviate social and academic pressures."

Teaching parents to help their children learn how to cope pays off for the rest of their lives. There will be pressure. There will be parts of your life when you will be under a lot of stress. Learning coping strategies is something they will help you, and that little grant of \$10,000 across all of those schools helps them do that.

Again, Manitoulin Secondary School has "Parental Supports for Post-Secondary Success." They will "host evening workshops to help parents/guardians and students prepare for the post-secondary experience." They have

planned workshop topics that include financial management, time management, managing emotional stress and making good choices.

I think we can all agree that when the parents get involved in financial management for their kids, we end up with kids who know how to manage their money better. It's the same thing with dealing with pressure, whether it be social pressure or academic pressure.

Monetville Public School is in the south end of my riding, close to the French River, where the big fires were last summer. "A maker space is a 21st-century initiative designed to engage students in creativity, innovation and collaboration. Parents/guardians and community partners will be invited into the school monthly to engage in a hands-on project-based inquiry with students."

R.H. Murray Public School in Whitefish is in the west part of my riding. "Throughout the ... school year, the Murray Muscles Team will host family fitness nights. These events will engage the community in a fun and enthusiastic way. All participants will sweat, while learning about physical literacy and brain development."

We all know that if we can encourage students to get active, to like physical activity, it will have benefits for their health, for their success in life, for the prevention of chronic disease for the rest of their life. This is what R.H. Murray Public School in Whitefish did very successfully with the students as well as their families.

Then we have S. Geiger Public School. They had a Welcoming Parents Open House. The staff at the school, "along with representatives from the Sudbury and District Health Unit, welcomed the local community for a sit-down spaghetti dinner and a book fair. Families toured the newly renovated facilities, visiting classrooms and learning more about the one-to-one technology available at the school."

I wanted to put a few of those on the record, Speaker, to help you understand. I represent 33 small, rural, northern communities. None of them are big enough to be considered a city. They don't have a city council. They don't have many of the amenities that we take for granted in southern Ontario. None of that exists. They have a school, and the school is where everything happens. When we look at what has been happening with the closure of small schools, it's always the same thing: The schools in the little communities of Nickel Belt get closed down. The kids get on to longer and longer bus rides to be brought to big schools in Sudbury.

For a kid who is three and a half or four or five or six or seven years old, to be on a bus for an hour, an hour and 20 minutes, an hour and a half, it always ends up the same way: They hate school. They don't really hate school; they hate the going to school and coming back. They are four and five years old. They are tired. By the time they get up in the morning and get ready and wait for the bus and make their lunch and do an hour and a half on the bus—by the time they get to school, they're tired. And after their day in school, the other hour and a half to get back to their community is just too much. Lots of them fall asleep on the bus. Lots of them miss their bus stop because they were sleeping. But most of them end up with the same thing: They hate school.

It doesn't have to be this way. I wish that when we talked about the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act we would look at what a network of small community schools could look like. How do we make sure that the funding formula supports small and rural schools so that those kids can continue to go to school in their community?

Have no fear, Speaker; there were schools in each and every one of those communities. My kids went to Naughton school. The school is no more. The kids from Naughton now get bused into Lively; they get bused into Sudbury. After the school went, it didn't take very long that—we had a convenience store. Well, the first thing to go was the ice cream store. That was gone. The chip stand went closely thereafter. Then the little rural gas station that was attached to the little convenience store—that is gone. We had one hall, and that is gone.

1600

When we had Naughton school, I used to play badminton there every Tuesday night. It was a place for people to get together. It was an asset for our community. But once those little schools are taken out of northern and rural communities, there is nothing left. Our communities sort of self-implode. We have no choice but to put the kids into the minivan and bring them away. This is wrong.

We choose to go and live in a northern Ontario small community—and when I see an act like this, the Safe and Supportive Classroom Act, I wish that would be safe and supportive for the people of northern Ontario also. I wish we would talk about what we would do about making sure that a rural little school continues to be open.

J'aimerais également parler, quand on parle de ce projet de loi, de ce que ça va vouloir dire pour la communauté francophone. Moi, je représente 33 petites communautés dans le nord de l'Ontario. Les petites communautés ne sont pas ni des villes, ni des villages. Elles sont de petites communautés où, souvent, la population francophone est majoritaire et on a une petite école francophone.

C'est à travers de la petite école francophone qu'on peut parler de toutes sortes de choses. Quand je regarde les ressources qui existent à Toronto pour parler de la population LGBTQ, vous avez toutes sortes de ressources. Nous, on a une ressource dans le nord de l'Ontario pour les gens que je représente : c'est l'école. Lorsque vous décidez d'enlever l'éducation sexuelle, lorsque vous décidez d'enlever du curriculum tout ce qui a rapport à la population LGBTQ, vous nous enlevez notre seule ressource.

Pour ces enfants-là, pour ces familles-là, la vie devient très difficile. Oui, on a des membres de la communauté LGBTQ dans le nord de l'Ontario, comme partout ailleurs. Qu'est-ce qui arrive au petit garçon qui, lui, a deux mères, et puis à l'école, bien, on lui dit, « Non, ça n'existe pas, les couples LGBTQ »? Mais qu'est-ce c'est que ça? Lui, il le vit à tous les jours.

De nous dire, « On va mettre une pause sur ces discussions »—cet enfant-là, sa vie continue. Tu ne peux pas mettre une pause sur la vie d'un enfant. La vie d'un enfant, ça continue. De dire que les ressources existent dans la communauté—elles n'existent pas dans la plupart des communautés que je représente.

I wanted to end my 20 minutes on the changes that have been made to the sex and health curriculum. I spend Monday to Thursday in Toronto. I live close to the gay area of Toronto, and I see all of the resources that exist out here. I see all of the knowledge and skills that are available to people so that they can learn and they can speak to their kids and their families. Come to where I live. Come to the 33 little communities that I represent. None of this is available. We have one source of information, and that is our elementary schools that are in the 33 little communities that I represent.

Once you take away the sexual and health curriculum, you take away our only access to information that gives parents the right vocabulary to talk about things like, “Yes, little Johnny who’s in grade 3 has two mums, because he is from an LGBTQ family.” But if you don’t have the language, if you don’t have your school, which helps educate people about sexuality, to help educate people about healthy behaviour, then for the people I represent, we have zero sources of information.

Some of our schools have done tremendous work in changing the stigma that used to have—we now had, and I talked about it, two trans women who laid a wreath at the Onaping Falls Legion for all of the LGBTQ people who have served. How did that come to be? Because, finally, in our schools, people had the right words to address topics with their kids and their families, and it made a world of difference. What you have done by putting a pause—you can’t pause the life of a child. You did wrong.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments? The member for University–Rosedale.

Mr. Paul Calandra: I do appreciate the opportunity to rise, and I thank the member for her comments.

The bill—again, not to harp on it for too long—obviously speaks to many different things than the member spoke about in her speech. It speaks to keeping our kids safe, and I know that all members of this House will agree with us that we need to keep our kids safe from teachers who do things that most of us would certainly not agree with. It deals, of course, with math; it deals with service animals.

Look, I have two kids in the school system. They have spectacular teachers, and have always been blessed with great teachers and a great school board. But as parents, we’re having to—and thankfully, I have the resources to do that; I’m in a great position that I can actually do that. We spend a lot of money every month for extra tutoring in math. They’re so far behind in math that we’ve had to do that. But we’re in the fortunate situation that we can afford to do that. I don’t think Ontario parents and families should have to worry about that. They spend a lot of money on their taxes in order to educate their children, and they should not have a school system that is failing them.

The member had talked about health and physical education. This is a consultation that is going on right now, and the members opposite will have lots of opportunity to discuss this. The minister has put forward a broad-ranging consultation, and I hope the members opposite will take the opportunity to express their opinions. It has been

changed at the primary level, not at the high school level. But again, I’ve heard from parents, I’ve heard from teachers—so many teachers who have said the same message to me: that a curriculum should not divide parents the way that this curriculum has divided parents. It puts them in an unfavourable position. It is not their job to be the negotiators in the classroom; it’s their job to teach. That’s why they are supportive of this, and I hope the member will be as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Speaker. And thank you also to the member for Nickel Belt and the member for Markham–Stouffville.

It was hard to hear about the troubling lack of support that rural schools experience and see. I also can see, as a resident of Toronto, how the lack of support has played out in Toronto schools as well.

You’re the government. There’s a lot of things that you can do to improve schools, and I wonder why this is the bill that you want to introduce when there are so many other things that we can do to provide additional support to our students and to get them to be the best they can be. The things that come to mind that I can see are the \$15.9-billion capital backlog that we see all across Ontario. That has played out in our schools as well, where we’ve got boilers that don’t work; we have classrooms that are too hot; we have kids that don’t have the learning experience or the classroom that they need to do the best that they can on tests.

We can also see this with the large classroom sizes that we have. When you have 30 kids in a JK/SK class, you’re not going to get the kind of learning outcomes that myself as a parent and parents everywhere would expect. It would be my hope that this government would focus on those kinds of improvements as opposed to what’s in this bill.

I’d also like to draw attention to what the member from Nickel Belt said around the sex ed curriculum. I have had hundreds and hundreds of emails from parents who are deeply concerned about the rollback of the sex ed curriculum. They don’t believe that taking away consent, cyberbullying, and teaching about those important topics is the way that will help our students succeed, and I encourage you to look at that as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Parm Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to thank my colleague from the NDP, from Nickel Belt, for her remarks.

I also want to echo the comments of my colleague from Markham–Stouffville, especially when it comes to math. As I mentioned earlier, as a proud parent of three young children, I can tell you that the biggest wealth for any parent is their children and the success of their children. I don’t think there’s any parent anywhere in the world who would like anything better than to see their kids succeed in life and have some of the basic skills that they need in order to succeed. I think this bill really addresses that.

1610

As my colleague from Markham–Stouffville pointed out, some of us are fortunate to be able to afford some of the after-school programs, which we have to send our kids to, to achieve the necessary skills that they require to be successful in life. A lot of families do not have the resources and do not have the means. It's not just the hundreds of thousands of dollars that they have to fork out each month to put their kids through these programs; it also costs them in terms of time: finding time from their work, finding time late in the evenings to drive them to some of these centres and back. We all know; we all live a very hectic lifestyle. Everybody is working 9 to 5, and then you've got errands to run and you've got bills to pay.

Under the Liberals, life has become very, very, unaffordable. Each and every single day we're here, we're trying to make life more affordable for all Ontarians. That's what the focus needs to be. I really want to thank my colleague the Minister of Education for bringing forward this piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments? The member for Brampton Centre.

Ms. Sara Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's so great to see you in the chair. I would like to thank all of my colleagues who have provided some insight with respect to Bill 48 and how we can help create safer and supportive classrooms.

I would like to thank my good friend here from Nickel Belt on her remarks, talking about access to education across this province and how there are serious gaps in making sure that, in rural and northern communities, young people are receiving the same sort of resources and environments that we here in the downtown and southern Ontario receive. I think that's very important.

I think there are some really important aspects of this piece of legislation that will help create safer and more supportive classrooms, but there are several gaps that are also present, as many of my colleagues have spoken about today. Especially on this side of the House, there are a number of concerns for us. We understand the importance of keeping our children safe and, of course, keeping them safe from sexual predators, for example. However, if we can't help young people identify inappropriate behaviour through educating them in the curriculum, they won't be able to understand if they've been inappropriately touched or if someone is engaging in inappropriate behaviour. The bill just doesn't do enough to make sure that we're securing those classrooms and making sure that students and young people are getting the types of resources they need to be successful and to be able to identify.

Yes, it's great that we want to focus on math skills—and I'll get more into this in my time that I'll have to talk on this bill. I think that it's one thing to have them be able to count, but again, we need to have them be able to identify what appropriate consent looks like and what inappropriate touching looks like. That's not something that this bill does enough about.

I've spoken many times here in the House with respect to my advocacy work prior becoming a member,

advocating for young people with disabilities to access opportunities, especially educational opportunities, in their communities. Unfortunately, this bill doesn't do enough in that respect either.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We'll return to the member from Nickel Belt for her two-minute summation.

M^{me} France Gélinas: What I did during my 20 minutes is really show what the Parents Reaching Out Grants were doing. Rainbow is a huge district; I think the geographical area that they cover is half the size of France. They have many schools. But with \$10,000, they were able to change things for the better for the families and the children that they try to educate.

When we look at safe schools, one of the number one threats in most of the schools in Nickel Belt is that there is lead in the water. So how do you deal with this? Every morning, the custodian comes in a little bit before the kids and he runs all of the taps to make sure that there's enough water running through the pipes so that the kids can drink at the water fountain. Do you see a problem with that, Speaker? The day that the custodian is sick, nobody does that, but the kids still drink from the water fountain that has too-high contamination in lead.

The kids do use the school on the weekends. They came for a volleyball tournament last weekend. Nobody was there to drain the pipes. What happened? All of the athletes drink from the water fountains that are contaminated with lead. You can look. The health unit has done a map as to the schools that have too much lead in their pipes. All of the schools in Nickel Belt fall within this, except for one or two of the new ones—we haven't got too many new ones in Nickel Belt.

This \$100 million that was coming from the cap-and-trade: All of the schools had applied to use it to change their water system so that the kids could drink water at school. But this is gone, and with it, the safety of many of the schools in Nickel Belt.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader or his designate specifies otherwise.

I recognize the Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. Bill Walker: We would like the debate to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): In that case, further debate?

Ms. Jane McKenna: I so much appreciate having this opportunity to get up and say a few words.

First of all, before I start into my 20-minute speech, I want to say that I was sitting beside the member from Whitby, and your speech was very touching and very thoughtful. I just want to point that out and thank you so much for that.

Next, I want to point out the member from Markham–Stouffville. He brought up a couple of good points. All children want to be equal. They don't want to be excluded from anything. In the 21st century, all the kids I've spoken to are sick and tired of being segregated in different groups. I was raised a Catholic, but we're all God's children. I think it's about time we talk about all children instead of segregating them.

The next thing I want to say is, one of the other—I'm not sure who it was in the NDP—they got up and said that we have an agenda. You're darned tootin' right we do. It's for the people of Ontario. It's not just about us who are in here; we're the advocates for everybody.

The other thing is, at the end of the day, it's exactly what the member from Markham–Stouffville said: Curriculum brings people together, not apart. In this House, we're advocates for those people in our communities, and that's what we're here to do, day in and out.

One more quick thing I'll just point out: I'm not sure which member it was from the NDP, but I think they said that 73% of trans children are bullied. When I looked it up online a few minutes ago, 69% of all kids are bullied. So why can't we just say all kids are being bullied and it's roughly the same amount? Let's respect all the kids who are being bullied day in and day out at school.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand in the House today and speak in support of the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, which would, if passed, make important amendments to the Ontario College of Teachers Act, the Early Childhood Educators Act, the Teaching Profession Act and the Education Act. We're also going to provide regulation-making authority for the Lieutenant Governor in Council to proscribe acts of a sexual nature as prohibited under the Criminal Code, which would result in the mandatory revocation of an educator's certificate.

This legislation will also go a long way to support our teachers in becoming even better prepared to teach the fundamentals of mathematics. It will require teachers to pass a content knowledge test in math in order to become certified to teach in Ontario's public school system.

It will also support students and their families who would benefit from the ability to bring their service animals into schools and classrooms across the province.

I did happen to note that when the member from Whitby was speaking, he said there are only 29 out of 72 schools, I think, or 32—I'll have to correct that in a minute—that are actually allowed to bring their service dogs into the school. That's a shame that we're at that capacity.

1620

I see the Minister of Education is sitting across from me, and I just wanted to point something out to you. I would have been thrilled as a mother of five to have had you as the Minister of Education with us. Thank you so much. I'm a grandmother now with two children who are in the system, and I can tell you this: Every parent wants to have the confidence in knowing that when their children walk into the schools and classrooms that they are feeling safe and supported, and I thank the heaven's stars that you're our Minister of Education because you've done

such a wonderful service for the education system. Keep up the hard work.

This is a significant change that will make a difference for students with special needs—about the service dogs in the classrooms. I can't begin to overstate how important it is for Ontario students to graduate with the knowledge, the skills, the confidence and the resilience they need to be successful in work, school and beyond.

Parents, employers and students have been asking the government to take their concerns seriously for 15 years. Students have told us they don't have the skills they need to feel confident in securing jobs. I want to say this loud and clear to every student in Burlington, in the Halton region and in this great province of Ontario that a PC government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, has heard them loud and clear. We are listening and we will take action to fix the aspects of our system that are not working as well as they should be. Failing to provide our students with the tools and education they need is not an option. I can assure you, this government is listening and taking action.

The Liberal government before us was all about empty promises and conversations that went on and on with no action taken, no changes made. Incremental change is not hard, especially when the need for change has become clearly and repeatedly articulated by students, teachers, parents and education administrators.

Our education system must remain engaged and dynamic. We must never stop striving for improvement. We are responsible for ensuring our students are and feel safe, supported and confident that in the Ontario public school system they can grow and ultimately realize their dreams. Public education in Ontario cannot be merely good enough; it has to be the best, full stop.

Over the past few months, we have undertaken a province-wide consultation to engage parents and the people of Ontario on education reform with the leadership of our Minister of Education. This consultation is for everyone—no one is excluded: parents, grandparents, students, guardians, teachers and school administrators—and on a wide spectrum of topics. They include financial literacy, improving math scores, engaging more people in science, technology and engineering, cellphone use in schools, and developing an age-appropriate health and physical education program.

Since the consultation was launched in late September, I understand from the Minister of Education that the feedback has been incredible. For those who haven't already participated, I strongly suggest you go to fortheparents.ca. There are a variety of ways that people can join the discussion.

By moving forward with the changes proposed in Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, we're sending a clear message: The health, safety and well-being of children and students in this great province is our number one priority. Our government promised to get back to the basics, and the unfortunate reality is that only half of Ontario grade 6 students are meeting provincial math standards. We all know that happened under the Liberals' watch.

By the time they got to grade 9, more than half of applied math students are failing to make the grade, and that is unacceptable. That is not good enough. It is clear to me and to those in the teaching professions, who will tell you that if teachers are not confident in the fundamentals of math, they are naturally going to be hesitant about teaching math.

I know of a high school teacher who was hired to teach art. She was an artist who was also a qualified teacher. She was asked by the board to teach math. It wasn't an optional request. She was terrified, Speaker, but she did what she had to do. She worked hard to refresh herself on the basics and tried to teach it to her students. Yes, she got better as time went on, but this is a hit-and-miss approach that does a disservice to the students as well as the teacher. This will never lead to excellence.

How many high school students today are being tutored in math? I spent a lot of money on math tutors over the years for my five kids. I don't think I was unusual. I would suggest that there are many, many students doing extra work outside the classrooms just because they struggle to get through calculus class.

Math matters, Speaker. A strong background in mathematics will open up so many more career options in science, technology and engineering for students. Too many kids are graduating from our high schools inadequately prepared to take further university- or college-level studies in these subjects. We all love to do what we're good at. Our public education system has to work harder to ensure that many more of our students get good at math. Our education system has to be the very best, and it must give students, as well as those teaching them, the support they need to succeed.

The new math requirements for teachers follow the test results from Ontario's Education Quality and Accountability Office from 2017-18. The results showed that fewer than half of the province's grade 6 pupils—49%—met the provincial standard in math—a one percentage point decline from the previous year and a five-percentage-point drop since 2014. That is unacceptable. Among grade 3 pupils, 61% met the provincial standard in math. That was down one percentage point from the previous year, and was a six-percentage-point drop since 2014. The EQAO results were definitive evidence that a change was needed.

Immediately following their release, the Minister of Education sent school board chairs a notice asking them to refocus one of their three mandatory professional activity days for teachers on arithmetic skills. Clearly, the best way to improve students' understanding and grasp of mathematical concepts is first to ensure that our math teachers are comfortable with the concepts themselves.

The reality is, teachers from across the province welcome this change. We've seen overwhelming support for a change that will ensure that math becomes a central focus of the education system. This will improve our students' employability in the labour market, where 70% of the jobs that will be opening up in the next four years are going to require not qualitative skills, but incredible, important quantitative skills.

In an era when mathematics literacy is more important than ever, we cannot afford to have our children losing ground. These revisions will restore proven methods of teaching the fundamentals and examine teachers' training in university education programs.

Under the Liberals, the pendulum had swung too far towards experimentation and creativity. Not all children adapt well to that teaching style. I sure know; I have four girls and one son, and my son definitely did not. These changes will provide assurance to parents that the government is committed to ensuring that Ontario continues to have one of the best education systems in the world, one which we can all be proud of, and it will help to ensure that students are prepared for the realities of tomorrow and the changing global economy.

The Ministry of Education does not currently provide direction to the school boards related to the use of service animals in schools, Speaker. Instead, it is up to each individual school board to develop their own process for managing service animal requests.

1630

Some school boards have developed policies related to the use of service animals while, unfortunately, others have not. In fact—here I am; I've been corrected now—39 school boards in Ontario have specific policies to address service animals. This is out of 72 boards across the province.

The Minister of Education has established policies and guidelines respecting service animals for school boards to follow when creating service animal policies. School boards would then be required to comply with these guidelines in creating their own policies with the expectation that all publicly funded school boards in Ontario would have a locally developed and publicly available service animal policy in place by September 2019.

Our government is committed to getting this right, and we want to assure the people of Ontario that input from the public and our education partners and stakeholders will be central to this process. We are taking action to keep children safe by proposing that all teachers and early childhood educators found guilty of committing any act of sexual abuse as defined in the Ontario College of Teachers Act and the Early Childhood Education Act have their certificates of registration revoked.

Bill 48 will also strengthen protection for students and children by expanding the definition of sexual abuse to include any prescribed acts of a sexual nature prohibited under the Criminal Code of Canada. In addition, this government has proclaimed sections in the Ontario College of Teachers Act and Early Childhood Educators Act that will require the colleges to provide funding for the therapy and counselling of students who have alleged that they were the subject of sexual abuse or an act of child pornography committed by an educator in the course of the educator's practice. These sections will be coming into force on January 1, 2020.

Just this morning, I heard an interview on CBC Radio with a man who, years ago, was repeatedly sexually abused by a high school teacher. Several years later, he

said that it was a good thing for him to go back to the school. Why, you ask, Speaker? Because he dreams about his time at the school once a week. With that admission, he was momentarily speechless because he was crying. Counselling may have helped him deal with the devastating long-term impact of these horrific experiences.

We don't have to look much further than our own backyard to see that members of both the public and the profession welcome these proposed changes.

Teachers will be able to do their jobs with confidence and pride when they are better prepared and better equipped to teach mathematics and to assess their students' knowledge. This is vitally important. Teachers must be satisfied that their students have achieved a comfort level with the curriculum before moving on to build on that foundation.

These changes will provide more confidence to parents that the government is working to keep our students safe. It will provide assurance to teachers that we are looking out to ensure that they have the competencies they need. It will provide assurance to students that we are providing them and their families the supports they need in the classroom.

I'm sure every one of us in this room—whether it's our children, grandchildren or ourselves—had teachers in school who touched our hearts and souls. I know that when I was in grade 6, my mother was killed in a car accident. I'm an identical twin, and Mr. Thiessen—I'm not sure if he's still alive or not, but he was probably one of the most instrumental people who gave my sister and me the strength to come to school every day, to be proud and to know that it was okay to miss our mom. Thoughts and memories: I'm 59 years old now, and thinking about him and what he did for my twin sister and me—moving forward to be able to get up every day and go to school was the most wonderful feeling of our lives. And there are people like that—Mr. Tomacki—I can name teachers after teachers that my children have experienced, that have touched their souls forever.

We want to be very grateful for the opportunity that the Minister of Education is giving back to these students, and to the teachers, to have the ability to teach children to the best of their capacity and for the children to grow and love being at school every day, because we spend the majority of our time at school. We spend the majority of our time at work.

I say this again to the Minister of Education: I sorely wish that when I was a youngster and my kids were younger, that you were the Minister of Education. We are thrilled every day, and we are blessed to have you in this position. The education system is going to turn itself around, thankfully, because of you as the leader. Thank you so much for all that you've done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Thank you for those comments.

With respect to the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, one of the key points I always think about is engagement. I know that most of my riding is specifically federal

schools, and this act doesn't have an impact on the federal schools, even though some schools may follow some of the curriculum that is being followed. However, I hear about engagement, and it seems that everyone has their own definition of what engagement is and what consultation is. Every community has their own protocol on how we do engagement. The way I'm hearing things—through the Internet, or online. To me, it's not good enough. I think we need to move beyond that.

Also, let's say, for example, if we look at the Ontario College of Teachers Act, some of the requirements required applicants for a teaching certificate to successfully complete a mathematics proficiency test—I'm not sure if I agree with that, just because, for me, schools are a safe place for youth.

When we hear of communities where our youth have a suicide pact or there are mental health issues—that's where we get the issues from; from the schools, from the teachers, because they're the ones who have access to the schools.

I just wanted to make those comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I want to thank the minister for putting this bill forward. She's not only a thoughtful and well-respected minister; she also calls a mean square dance with Team Farmall in here. She has a very interesting career life, if I could put it that way.

I'd like to speak a little bit about the dog guides. I went to Oakville and witnessed how they train these dog guides. Actually, that school was started by a former constituent of mine by the name of Bruce Murray. It's funded by the Lions Foundation of Canada. I've been a Lions member since 1987. It's really rewarding to see how these dog guides work with the autistic children, certainly, with the blind, the hearing impaired, and others.

I didn't realize there was an issue with these dogs being allowed in schools. I thought we were past that. I guess I've been away from the education system for a while, since my kids are all through that. But I thought we were past that business, and I'm very sad to see that there are schools that won't let dog guides in. Certainly, this is addressed in this bill.

1640

The other things I'd like to talk about is math. Years ago, my middle son was taking advanced math in high school—calculus and that type of thing—and wondered why he should be taking that. He was very good at it; I guess it was easy for him. I took him to a local co-op. This guy by the name of Pete Yundt would make your bill up. I was there one day and got this bill made up, and it was about this long with all of these things. There's a calculator sitting on each side of him, and he adds it up by hand. He goes up and down the columns—carry one, carry two, whatever he's doing. My son stood there in amazement. I said, "That's what you've got to have. You've got to be able to understand the fundamentals of math to be successful in this life." Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I wanted to put this on the record a little bit: Pathways to Education came to Queen's Park today. Pathways to Education is innovative community-based programming to help youth from low-income communities to stay in school, to graduate from high school and to achieve their full potential. It works within a community alongside the local school system to provide academic, financial, social, one-on-one support to address the barriers that youth can face to education. They are embedded with a trusted organization.

They came to Queen's Park today because they are worried about their funding. They have a track record that everybody can be very, very proud of. They have brought kids back to school. They have kept kids in school who have gone on to be leaders of our community. Had they not had access to Pathways to Education, chances are that those kids would have dropped out. Without an education, we know all of the challenges that people face to support themselves, to stay healthy, to stay engaged, to have a job that is not precarious and pays more than minimum wage.

I'm telling you all of this because we keep seeing cuts to our education system. Whether it be the programs that the Rainbow District School Board was talking about, the Parents Reaching Out Grants that did such a great job throughout Ontario, models such as Pathways to Education, or the \$100 million that was coming through the cap-and-trade to help fix some of our school infrastructure, day after day we hear about more resources that were available so that our schools could excel and be the safe and supportive classrooms that this bill aims to do. It also takes money to do this. Cutting money in education does not achieve any of those goals.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I'm so pleased the member for Burlington did talk about students with special needs with respect to Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act. Again, as has been mentioned in debate this afternoon, one of the most important changes relates to the use of service dogs. Like many here, I have attended so many Lions events and fundraisers to support the program for service dogs. I've also had an opportunity for a number of years to be associated with W. Ross. The member from Brantford-Brant—sometimes I say Brant-Brantford because I used to represent Brant—would know W. Ross Macdonald, the school for the blind. We would be in the audience when the Lions would come in to W. Ross. The students knew that these were the big guys. These were the heroes. These were the people they truly looked up to. So with respect to service dogs aiding the blind, the eyes for the blind and visually impaired, and other uses—as I understand, they are used to help warn of impending seizures and assist children with other special needs, such as autism spectrum disorder and mental health needs.

I had a meeting a year or so ago in my constit office. A gentleman who suffered from seizures used a constrictor snake as a warning for him. He wanted some regulation

changed. I think the jury is out on that; there's a safety issue. I'm used to constrictors. I used to work in South America. In fact, I lived in a house in Bedford that had two African pythons and an anaconda, and they kept getting out. But with the general public and in a school setting, maybe not. Let's stick with the dog.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We will return to the member from Burlington so she can wrap up what she's just heard on questions and comments.

Ms. Jane McKenna: It's always enlightening to hear the member tell us some of your stories, like with the python. That caught my ear for a minute there while you were talking about service dogs.

Thank you, Speaker. I just want to thank you so much for the opportunity. When you get the opportunity to stand up in this House, you start researching everything, and when you're writing your notes about what to say, we always have personal stories about ourselves and things that happen. That's the passion that comes out of us here. So I'm very grateful for the opportunity to stand up here and speak today, Speaker.

But I also wanted to point out in the few minutes that I have here—this is from the Ontario College of Teachers and was written on October 25. I just want to read a couple of their quotes.

"The college welcomes these legislative changes, which will expand the definition of sexual abuse and require mandatory revocation for any acts of sexual abuse.

"Earlier this year, the college urged the government to amend our legislation to further expand the definition of sexual abuse acts that would result in the mandatory revocation of a member's licence.

"These acts included other forms of physical sexual relations between the member and the student other than sexual intercourse and touching of a sexual nature of the student by a member that is not restricted to an identified body part.

"The college welcomes these legislative changes that will further expand the definition of sexual abuse to better protect Ontario students from abuse by teachers."

The college also said that it "looks forward to working with the government" and the Minister of Education "to establish mechanisms to further enhance teacher competency in mathematics."

I just pulled this out; I just saw that I had that and I thought that because it was from the Ontario College of Teachers, it was good just to wrap up with that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Burlington for sharing her story about her mother.

I'm pleased to be speaking about this bill, as a parent and as a former teaching instructor at Ryerson. I want to start by getting a few things clear. Sexual abuse of children and teenagers is utterly wrong, and no one disagrees with the practice that teachers should lose their licence if they are found to be guilty of sexually assaulting a child or teenager. I have a daughter in school, and I want to be able to drop her off knowing that she will be safe from

predators and fully supported, just like every other parent hopes for.

There is also no question that we should be improving our kids' understanding of math. Understanding of math helps us in our day-to-day lives, from doing our personal finances to cooking to deciphering our phone bill charges to calculating interest rates. The understanding of math also helps our kids prepare for careers that require math, from engineering to science to finance to computer science. There's no question that it's a priority.

What I have concerns about, Speaker, is the approach that this bill is taking to address sexual assault and improve learning outcomes, because five months in, I don't believe that this government has made our kids any more safe, and I don't believe that our classrooms are being provided with any more support, which is the intended headline of this act.

One of the root causes that I see with the sometimes lack of quality teaching in the classroom has a lot to do with bigger root-cause issues which are not being addressed in this act. One of them is large class sizes, at every level: high school, middle school and elementary.

I got to experience the impact of large class sizes on student learning when I enrolled my daughter in JK and SK. There were 30 kids in the classroom, and kids at that age can range; they've got a whole lot of different levels. But many of them are nervous. They're shy. They need help with getting dressed. Some of them still want a nap in the middle of the day. Some of them need help going to the washroom. Some of them have behavioural issues, like they don't want to sit still, like they want to tackle their classmate. For teachers, when they're in a classroom of 30 kids, it's very hard to keep the class under control, it's very hard to keep the noise in a classroom at a manageable level, and it's very hard to teach. They spend a lot of time on classroom management and not teaching the necessary things that our kids need to learn, like math.

So I believe that a more sensible way to deal with math scores is to move forward on smaller class sizes. That will help teachers teach and students learn, and it will help teachers identify and provide that additional support to kids who might be falling behind. This government isn't doing it.

1650

If this government was truly serious about improving math outcomes, it would also do something else that previously existed, and that would be to provide educational supports to teachers that they can access to upgrade their math skills. I think that actually makes a lot of sense, because there are 125,000 teachers in classrooms right now, and instead of providing them with support, this government cut funding to that program. Instead, what we're getting in this bill is a math test, which we know nothing about yet, that student teachers have to take.

I read an article in the Toronto Star that assessed this test. It calculated that it would take 25 years for every teacher in every classroom to have taken this test, because there are 125,000 teachers and, on average, 5,000 teachers retire each year. Why would we be suggesting a solution

that would take up to 25 years to roll out when there are more sensible ways to go forward on to improve math scores, and some of them are already in place, which you're choosing to get rid of?

If this government was serious about tackling student learning, I encourage you to also look at the issue of our crumbling schools. Thanks to the Liberals, Ontario's schools need \$15.9 billion in capital repairs. This government has just made this worse by cutting an additional \$100 million from that school repair backlog budget. This is a government that had ministers, such as the education minister, who signed the Fix Our Schools pledge.

We know that crappy classrooms hurt learning. It is hard to learn math if you're freezing in a portable classroom because your school doesn't have the resources to build additional classrooms. It's hard to learn math if students are in 30-degree-plus classrooms because the school can't afford to install air conditioning units. I'm not talking about centralized air conditioning; I'm talking about the simple box that you put in the classroom that would actually lower the temperature to a more manageable level. That's certainly been the experience in my riding.

In University-Rosedale, many of the schools are aging. We've got significant capital backlogs for many of our schools. We've got Clinton; it needs \$9 million in repairs. We've got Central Tech; it needs \$54 million. We've got Jesse Ketchum; it needs \$15 million. That's a lot.

I was recently approached by a student at King Edward school. He told me what it's like to learn in an overheated classroom. He's in grade 9. He talked about how many parents kept their kids at home for up to two weeks because it was too hot to sit in a classroom in June and learn. He talked about how his performance and his peers' performance in tests suffered because it was too hot to concentrate. These are issues I encourage this government to address so we can improve outcomes not just in math, but in all the other courses and subjects that our students take as well.

If this government was serious about tackling sexual assault, it would also reinstate the sex ed curriculum that teaches kids about consent, about LGBT rights and about bullying. When we teach kids about consent, we are teaching them about what it looks like and that it is wrong.

I've had many students and teachers from my riding contact me, expressing deep dismay that the sex ed curriculum is being removed. I've got one letter here. It was from the Rosedale Heights School of the Arts; 350 students signed this letter. In it, it says, "We are demanding the right to an education that teaches us about consent, that teaches us about sexual identities and orientations, and that they are valid, that teaches us to celebrate one another for our differences and that teaches us to remain safe, both online and in the real world." That's what teachers are saying. I think that's something that this government should be taking very seriously and moving forward on.

After reading this bill and thinking about all the things that this government is not doing, it's hard not to see that the real purpose of this bill is to demonize teachers and

erode the trust that we should be building between parents, students and teachers.

To summarize, if this government truly wants to move forward on improving our schools and learning outcomes, I encourage you to put kids first. I encourage you to fix the school repair backlog so kids can learn in a good learning environment. I encourage you to fix the education formula so we can say goodbye to overcrowded classrooms and yes to teachers having smaller class sizes, so that they've got the time to teach kids individually and find the ones who are falling behind. I encourage you to give practising teachers the support they need so that they can improve their math skills, if they so choose to. I encourage you to restore the sex ed curriculum so our students can learn about consent and empower themselves in their lifetime, not just in the classroom. I believe these are the ways that we can improve our schools and provide the safe and supportive learning environment we need to make sure our kids are the best they can be.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to get up and speak again towards the bill. As we've been saying all afternoon, at least on this side of the House, there are many provisions. I know the member from Burlington highlighted, in a very good speech, the many different provisions in the bill that are being supported by the college and by educators.

The member for Milton assisted me in highlighting some of the challenges that parents are facing, in particular with the math curriculum. I've highlighted it a bit in some of my earlier remarks. It's unacceptable that parents who send their kids to school aren't seeing the results they expect. It's interesting; I send my kids to get extra help in math—and it's very costly, but it's very important for them to do—and what my kids are learning at a high price to my family is what I actually learned in school when I was a kid. They're learning the basics of mathematics, and they have caught up very, very quickly. But as I said, I'm lucky, I have the ability to do that; a lot of parents across this province don't have the same.

As a province, it is very clear that we have been failing the next generation, that we have been failing our kids. It's not because there's a lack of resources; it's because Ontario families are spending a lot of money on taxes and they expected their kids to be supported—but we haven't done that. So this bill helps to address that.

Service dogs: The member from Kitchener South–Hespeler highlighted some of the important features of why we needed to standardize this, and the minister was nice enough to bring this into the bill.

Of course, we all want to keep our children safe. This is the very first step in helping to reshape our education system to not only meet the needs of today's generation, but also future generations.

I'm very encouraged that the members of the opposition are excited about what's to come and all the changes that are coming forward in the future, too.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Ms. Marit Stiles: It's a real pleasure to speak and reflect on the excellent speech by the member from University–Rosedale and the many important points she made. I think that her constituents would be very proud right now to hear all of those examples that she takes right from the community. I know they mean a lot to many of the folks in her riding, which is neighbouring my riding—so I'm quite familiar with many of those schools as well.

I did want to reflect a little and just respond to the member opposite from Markham–Stouffville, who was talking about the challenges that parents face. Absolutely, we all have expectations that our children are going to come out of school and know math and do well and, hopefully, they will be able to succeed in life. But I think there's a fundamental flaw here in the thinking that this math test alone is what's going to solve that problem. I thought the member from University–Rosedale made a really important point when she pointed out that it's going to take 25 years to really see an impact, to have all of those teachers have had that test.

At the end of the day, I think we all know that the really big issue in our classrooms is the lack of support for teachers. The fact that this government would then also do away with the advanced qualification subsidy that school boards have made great use of to try to improve the qualifications of their teachers, the teachers who are in the classrooms now—I think that is hugely problematic, and I don't understand how that fits at all with what the government has been saying repeatedly in this debate about the need to improve math results.

I also want to add: I think that, at the end of the day, as we've mentioned—all of us here—over and over, the real answer to this is fixing the funding formula once and for all. So I just beg of the government to please try to address the funding formula.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I'd like to thank the member for University–Rosedale for her remarks.

As I've mentioned a couple of times, this is such a critical piece of policy that our government is introducing, to make sure that our schools are safe and that our students are receiving the best possible education they can get.

1700

Mr. Speaker, I hearken back to a story that I experienced in my previous career. I was serving as a teaching assistant at Carleton University, in the Roman history department. Unfortunately, although I have always wanted to be a Roman historian, I've ended up a politician instead. But when I was serving as a TA, I was stunned by the quality of work being produced by students: their lack of critical analysis skills, their ability to simply come up with fake material, and their atrocious grammar and spelling. I remember one student wrote an entire 10-page essay on how Julius Caesar persecuted the Christians. Only problem: There were no Christians at that point; they were still Jewish. So, an entire 10-page essay that was completely made up.

I see things like this and I think to myself that we need to be doing a better job. These students who are not meeting basic math standards: At the very least, what you have to do is go back to the teachers' colleges and say that we're going to introduce some new stringent standards to make sure that the teachers who are being graduated today are going to be held to a higher standard so that our students get the best possible math education they can receive, which is a goal that all of us agree with.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I'll use my final 10 seconds to remind everybody watching at home, including my grandmother, to go online at fortheparents.ca and take part in this extremely important consultation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Gee, I thought you were going to tell us to beware of the ides of March or something like that.

I'll turn to the member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I've listened to this debate a number of times, and I want to say to the Conservatives over there who are bragging about the fact their kids aren't getting the scores in school that they should be getting and can afford to send them to get tutored that I can tell you something: I'm married to a principal, one who was in a school board for 30 years before she became a principal. My daughter works with special needs in the school board. My middle daughter, Chantel, is a grade 4 teacher. So I thought it would be fair and reasonable for me to go and say, "What's the problem with math scores?" This is what they said to me: "This policy is not going to improve math scores for students. We should be making sure that every kid who needs in-classroom support is receiving it. We know the government is not doing this now. They are making it worse." And because of this government we know that.

This is what it's really about. You guys can laugh over there. It isn't funny, because I take exception to the fact that you're attacking teachers. My entire life has been around the school board. By the way, Jacqueline, my youngest daughter, is at Brock University. You know what's surprising about that? She came through a public school board. She actually got her education in a public school board, in a public school, grade 1 to grade 8, in high school, and then she went on to Brock University. A wonderful kid, over 90% average and she got it in a public school board.

But this is what this is about. We know what this policy's about. It's not about helping students in Ontario. It's not about giving teachers the resources they need to do their job. It's about dehumanizing teachers. It's about making the public think our teachers are not qualified to do their job. Well, I can tell you, the teachers down in Niagara are more than qualified to do their job. They are some of the hardest-working people in our community.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I guess we'll return to the member from the University-Rosedale for her two-minute summation.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for the comments that were made. When the member from Markham-Stouffville talked a little bit about some of the concerns parents face,

it makes me think about the emails and letters I receive from parents in my riding about the concerns they face.

I have a parent who has pulled her kid out of the SK class she was in because her kid was being bullied for looking different. In the end, she couldn't deal with it. It happened during lunchtime, when the class size ratio was huge and the lunchroom monitor simply didn't have the number of eyes and hands and the ability to monitor all the kids to stop all these things from happening. She had to pull her kid out of school and she was devastated about that.

It reminds me about my neighbour whose kid has autism. He could only put his kid in school for four hours a day because that's the maximum amount of time that the school will allow his daughter to attend. After that, he spends up to \$60,000 a year providing autism therapy and support because he's still on the wait-list.

These stories tell me that it's not just about having student teachers do a math test. That's not what is going to improve the daily experience that teachers have, that students have and that parents hear about when they pick their kids up from school. I encourage you to look at some of the root causes that we could explore that will improve the experience we have in schools. That means fixing the funding formula, it means tackling the capital repair backlog and it means providing additional support to kids who really need that additional support.

I think a lot of parents who you're talking to and who we're hearing from will be very happy if you move forward with those goals.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. Will Bouma: It's always an honour to rise in the House and to speak to such important issues as these. I want to thank all the members for the debate we've heard this afternoon. Their input on this issue is as important as supporting our students and making our kids safer and more supported across our great province.

It truly is a privilege to speak, then, in support of this bill. The provisions of this bill will serve to protect our students from those who might otherwise do them harm. It will equip our students with the fundamental tools and skills needed to succeed in the modern workforce by requiring basic math skills exams for all new educators. It will support those with service animals by creating a framework within which school districts can create the rules governing their use. This will empower students across the province and help each and every student succeed.

Improving the education system and creating an environment within which Ontario students can gain the skills they need to succeed is one of this government's top priorities. These skills are ones that our students need to succeed not only at school, but also in the workplace and in life. This bill is a step in that direction.

Because of the provisions of this bill, Ontario's classrooms will be safer, teachers will be more confident in their ability to teach fundamental skills and special-needs students with service animals will find our schools to be

more accessible. In short, this bill will break barriers that would otherwise prevent students from getting the most out of their educational environment.

One of the most important aspects of an environment that is conducive to learning is safety. Our children and students need to feel safe and they need to be safe. Our government is taking steps to ensure that our students feel safe in every classroom across our great province.

By introducing this bill, the Minister of Education and the government are sending a clear and important message to students. That is that your safety, your well-being and your ability to engage with your peers and teachers without harassment are our top priority. This is a message that we cannot stress enough, and I think it is one that everyone can agree with.

The amendments prescribed by this bill to the Ontario College of Teachers Act and the Early Childhood Educators Act send this message loud and clear. They would mandate that any educator who is found guilty of committing an act of sexual abuse would automatically and immediately have their certificate of registration revoked. This is just common sense. In doing so, we are letting students, teachers and all of Ontario know that this government does not tolerate this sort of abusive behaviour. Any teacher found guilty of an act of sexual abuse should never again enter a classroom in any capacity as an educator.

Not only are we rightly taking a zero-tolerance approach to this issue, but this bill will expand the currently narrow and inadequate list of acts which would necessitate a mandatory revocation of a teacher's certificate of registration. How can we say to students that we care about them, and about creating a safe and supportive learning space for them, when we do not consider such behaviour as groping or verbal harassment as grounds for a mandatory licence revocation, as it currently stands? This government recognizes that this is not right. We recognize that these behaviours are serious instances of misconduct and that any educator who engages in such conduct should not be allowed to re-enter the classroom in that capacity.

This bill will ensure that this is the case by requiring that the certificate of registration of any educator found guilty of any sexual act that is prohibited under the Criminal Code of Canada be immediately revoked. By doing this, we are letting our students and teachers know that no act of abuse will be tolerated. This bill before us today makes our position clear that no person, student or otherwise, should have to tolerate an abusive learning environment or harassment of any kind.

1710

Yet we know that in order to gain the skills to succeed, both in the workplace and in life, our students need not just a conducive and safe place to learn but also good instruction. For teachers to teach, they must first have the knowledge themselves. This bill is a step forward in ensuring that every teacher has a solid grasp of foundational skills. It does this by requiring that every teacher candidate in Ontario must pass a basic math exam before being certified.

In today's economy, mathematics skills are vitally important, and this government recognizes that. Society is undergoing an unprecedented transformation. Disruptive innovation is commonplace in nearly every economic sector. All of this change is underpinned by science, technology, engineering and math, or STEM, as we call it.

In order to succeed in a rapidly changing, dynamic Canadian economy, our students must have a solid grasp of foundational mathematics. The provisions of this bill will ensure that each and every teacher in Ontario has the fundamental knowledge to teach such an important skill as basic mathematics. This move is part of our government's priority in ensuring that each and every student has the skills and knowledge to succeed in whatever they choose to pursue, whether that be an apprenticeship, post-secondary education or the workforce.

Speaker, the importance of having a solid grasp of basic mathematical concepts and skills cannot be understated. This is made extremely clear by the fact that the vast majority of jobs in the future will require both quantitative and qualitative skill sets. This is just one reason why Ontario students' declining math skills are so concerning.

We want to set our students up for success, and for the past 15 years we have been failing to do so. By requiring teachers to be proficient in basic math skills, this bill represents a step in the opposite direction of the former Liberal government, one in which we are setting up our students for success. It is a measure to make sure that no child gets left behind.

This bill, if passed, would ensure that regardless of where a child lives or goes to school, whether that be in the richest or the poorest school district in Ontario, their teachers will be qualified to teach the most necessary and fundamental math skills. Not only will this profoundly benefit students directly, but it will also increase economic opportunity for the most disadvantaged pupils in the province. It will decrease inequality and it will increase opportunity.

For our students and our province to succeed, we need to ensure that each and every one of them has access to high-quality education by teachers who are qualified and knowledgeable. Teachers who are themselves competent in mathematics will be better able to serve their students. They will be better able to relate math concepts to real-life problems and will be better able to make connections to other mathematical topics.

As I have said already, we need to ensure that we create and maintain an environment in which students can learn and succeed. For some students, service animals are an essential part of a safe, supportive and comfortable environment. For them, service animals are not simply pets; rather they are partners in their day-to-day life. But as it currently stands, there is no framework governing the use of service animals in schools. Each school board makes its own policies on that matter. This bill addresses that.

In order that we give students in every school district the right supports that they need, we need clarity and consistency on the use of service animals. This bill ensures that a process is in place in every school district, a process

that is fair. Without a consistent and universal framework for the use of service animals, each school district has to figure it out for itself. This leads to a disjointed and fragmented set of rules from district to district. What this means is that students who require a service animal to perform at their best may not be able to have their service animals in one district while they may in another.

What we are doing is standardizing the process required for students and their families when they request service animals. In the same way as requiring teachers to undergo math testing before being certified, the provisions of this bill regarding service animals will serve to reduce inequity among Ontario school districts and will better support those students who need their service animals to perform at their best.

We realize that for our school districts and the students in them to thrive, their policies must be locally informed. That's why this bill proposes to create a legislative framework within which the local school boards can make locally informed decisions on the use of service animals. This preserves the ability of the school districts to make appropriate, locally informed decisions while ensuring that students with service animals get the needed support across the province.

Speaker, all of this is being done within the context of a broader consultation with parents, students, educators and other stakeholders. This is done to create a better public education system which serves Ontario's students; one which listens to, supports engages and empowers students. Each of the provisions of this bill will make education more accessible.

This bill, if passed, will create a learning environment that works for every student across the province. It will protect students and give them the feeling of security that is necessary to learn. By requiring educators to be proficient in fundamental math, it will empower students to learn the fundamental skills needed to succeed in a modern workforce. And by creating a framework governing the use of service animals, it will support those with special needs and will enable them to learn at their best.

In my last few seconds, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to remind all those watching at home to go to fortheparents.ca and to fill in that survey. Make your voice heard. It's so important through this process. We've wanted to open this up. We've heard all afternoon the disastrous state our schools are in. We need dramatic improvements in infrastructure and education and everything else. Make your voice heard today so that we can hear what you have to say to us about what you want your education system to look like.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sara Singh: I'd like to thank the member from Brantford–Brant for his comments and also the member from, I believe, it's Oakville. I just wanted to also thank her for sharing a very personal story with respect to her mother and—

Interjection.

Ms. Sara Singh: Oh, Burlington, there we go—close enough. Thank you. I'm still learning all of the ridings.

It's really a pleasure to rise here today and to speak. We are essentially going to be supporting this bill, but again, we have some real concerns with some of the work that is being put forward, and that's what I think this debate is for: to flesh out some of the concerns that we have.

I think members on this side of the House are continuing to raise very similar concerns, and we're just asking for some respect to hear those concerns out, because again, we do represent members in the community who are sharing those with concerns us. Our job is to reiterate that to the government in any piece of legislation that is being put forward, and to make sure you all on the government benches do hear us out and give us the opportunity to raise those concerns and take them very seriously. Again, they are concerns that are coming from people across our communities.

The member from Brantford–Brant really brought up some great points with respect to the changing economy and the changing world that we operate in. I think it's important for us to acknowledge that in addition to math in our curriculums, there are so many other elements that need to be considered. I had hoped that with the consultations that this government is currently undertaking with communities across this province, we would have had other avenues than just simply an online survey for them to voice their concerns. For example, in my community of Brampton, there were many people who would not have the wherewithal to access a survey online. They too are waiting to see when this government is going to be coming into our riding to ask them their thoughts on how they can better improve the curriculum here in Ontario. Yet we haven't heard from this government whether consultations will be taking place in person or simply just online.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jill Dunlop: I'm thrilled to rise again and speak to this bill. As I've mentioned before, I'm a mother of three daughters. When I spoke earlier, I talked about the safe schools and the importance of that.

In this case, I found a great article related to math skills. We all know that math skills in education are important not only as a further education, but as we enter our professional lives and for our academic success. I found an article here from the Toronto Star, so it's nice to have the Star supporting our bills. It's an opinion article that is titled, "Should Teachers Have to Pass A Math Test? Yes."

The article goes on to say, "One provision of Bill 48—the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, is to require Ontario teacher candidates to pass a basic math test before certification. This is a step in the right direction if teaching is to be respected as the challenging and complex profession that" we all know "it is."

"The Ontario College of Teachers was established in 1997 in large part because it was 'time for teachers to join doctors, nurses and other professions in self-regulation.' Testing is common before certification in many professions....

"But it may improve public confidence in the competency and proficiency of the profession.

“The Ontario College of Teachers—the body charged with licensing, governing and regulating ‘the Ontario teaching profession in the public interest’—supports the move” that the government is making.

1720

I also found some interesting information. Lakehead University, which has a campus in my riding, already requires teacher candidates to achieve at least 75% on a math competency exam as a condition of graduation, in order to help ensure that all eligible candidates “understand basic mathematical concepts at their desired teaching level.” So we’re already seeing it across other universities and teaching colleges. It’s very important that these math skills are developed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I’d like to thank the member from Brantford–Brant for his comments. Something that he mentioned, as have other Conservative members, is the education consultation website for the parents. But I’d like to ask all of you: What about the students? Are you listening to them? Has any Conservative member here attended any of the student rallies that have been organized across the province? Have you attended to listen to your students who participated in a walkout of their schools? After all, this education consultation is about their education. It’s about their lives, so the voices that we absolutely cannot miss and that must be at the core of our consultation are the students’.

Now, I actually—this is my nerd moment—love looking at survey designs. In fact, I took an advanced survey methods course in my master’s degree, and I can tell you that surveys can be designed to lead to very specific answers. Surveys like the one that I’ve seen on the website are limited to very specific topics. Is there anything about Indigenous curriculum? No. Is there anything about school repairs? No. Telephone town halls? We all know there is a screening process before anybody can say anything in a telephone town hall.

What I’d like to see is what we’ve asked for time and time again: Open the doors. Let the public come in. Have open hearings. That would be true consultation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Mr. Speaker, it’s nice to see you in the chair today, sir.

We’ve heard a lot about “prescribed” and the Early Childhood Educators Act. We’ve heard a lot about service animals, the Ontario College of Teachers Act and so on. I want to relate a story near and dear to my heart.

A little over two years ago, down in the Chatham-Kent area, there was a dogfighting ring. We’ve all heard about the 21 pit bulls. I fought hard, along with many other advocates not just in the Chatham-Kent area but throughout Ontario, Canada and, in fact, North America, to save the lives of those 21 pit bulls. I give a lot of credit to Dog Tales Rescue and Sanctuary and Rob Scheinberg, who wanted to take those dogs and give them a happy forever life at his dog rescue.

I mention that because unfortunately there was legislation that had been passed here in this Legislature several years ago, BSL—breed-specific legislation—banning pit bulls. I understand, and they made comparable arguments, as to why pit bulls should be banned, but they were also saying that these dogs could not be rehabilitated. Well, I’m going to share something with you. I just found this out not too long ago: Some of those pit bulls were pregnant when they were first taken away, and some became pregnant a little bit afterwards, the point being that they had puppies. Those pitties who had puppies—the puppies have now grown, and here’s some good news for you: Those puppies are now service dogs, and those service dogs are going to be used, so bravo to the Minister of Education for ensuring that service dogs are a part of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Boy, am I ever glad that you got to that point at the end. I was going to ask, when the member wrapped up, to make sure that somehow they tied in that aspect of it.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: You know I would do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. No, that was very good.

We return to the member from Brantford–Brant for his two-minute summation.

Mr. Will Bouma: I’d like to thank the members for Brampton Centre, Simcoe North, Parkdale–High Park and Chatham-Kent–Leamington for all of their comments this afternoon.

You know, I did speak to the kids who walked out of the high school. We had a very good conversation. It was interesting: About 140 of them left the high school and, being high school kids, I’m glad they’re still normal because only 40 of them managed to make it to my office. But it was a 35-degree Friday and we gave them water and cookies, and I listened to what they had to say. I said at the time, “I’m really hoping that our consultation process will be open for the kids also,” and as we’ve heard from the minister this afternoon, indeed it is.

I just want to take a minute to really thank the minister for taking on this file, because if there’s one thing that we’re definitely agreed on in the House this afternoon, it’s that our schools are in tough shape. There are systemic and structural issues not only with how we’re teaching our kids, but in fact building places that we have to learn in. I think what we’ve done here with this bill is just to take a few things—it’s kind of like low-hanging fruit—that we can just improve quite quickly.

We heard this afternoon that 73% of all trans youth are bullied, and that’s tragic. In looking that up, bullying.ca, as the member mentioned, says that 69% of all youth are bullied. To me, that’s almost within a standard deviation or two of each other. We have these issues in our schools that we have to face. If nothing else, everything that has been done so far sure hasn’t solved the problems in our schools.

I am so glad that our minister has taken such a proactive approach and is expanding this consultation from just being something about sex ed into how we can really fix

our schools. Because I really believe that, in many opinions, there is good advice. Again, fortheparents.ca: Fill it out.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Burch: I'm pleased to rise today to debate Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act. Like many of my colleagues, I don't actually believe this bill is going to lead to safer and more supportive classrooms. Like my friend from Niagara Falls, I think much of it is a cheap shot at our hard-working teachers across the province, and it's not supported by any kind of evidence.

First, this bill does not address the core problems that we have in our schools. I'm very proud of all of the work that our school boards have been able to accomplish over the past decade, despite a broken system. As my friend from Davenport articulated, we've had 20 years of governments refusing to address fundamental problems that plague our schools.

It's clear that there is a broken funding formula. We have classrooms that are massively underfunded. Class sizes continue to grow and, more frequently than not, are operating at capacity. The resources we have for special education students or students who are struggling are not enough. Teachers have too many students and not enough time for one-on-one help for the kids. Every day, we all hear stories about teachers having to pay out of their own pockets for supplies. Those are the kinds of teachers that we have in the province of Ontario.

First, for this Conservative government to put sexual abuse of children and math tests for teachers into one bill, I find appalling and wrong. It takes away from the debate on both of these very important issues. We saw, for weeks, this education minister answer questions about sex education by talking about math testing. Conservatives like to change the subject. This minister has become very, very good at it.

Speaking of math tests, this bill introduces a new math test for teachers at the certification level. Candidates for teaching certificates are not testing on any other subject matter at this stage of their careers, which is unprecedented. We've had many questions regarding this math test: What will the test look like? Why is it being done after teachers have already finished their schooling? I have sincere doubt that this test will improve math scores, and there is absolutely no evidence that a math test at the certification level will improve math scores.

Beyond this, the math test is only for new teachers; it does nothing to improve the skills of teachers already in the profession. What's worse is that, while this government is putting forward this bill, they have cancelled the program that allowed teachers to upgrade their math skills.

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In another example, this government cut the Parents Reaching Out Grants. This modest amount of funding was used by parents and school councils to host workshops and speaking events, with the goal of breaking down barriers to participation in the education of their children. It is hypocritical to say that you're doing this in the name of

better education but rip away the program that would improve the very thing you have identified as a problem.

Time and time again, we see an absence of evidence-based policy from this government: climate change denial and income-inequality denial; with green energy and the cancelling of rebates, with tons of evidence showing that much of the green energy program was working; the sex ed curriculum, which was working for students, being cancelled with no replacement; trans citizens' gender identity and science being denied recently by this government and this party; sick notes being reintroduced with evidence to the contrary, that requiring sick notes actually increases transmission of illness in workplaces; and ignoring mountains of evidence showing that minimum wage increases are good for the economy.

It's clear that the root of this problem is not that teachers need math tests; it's that the teachers are overworked and classrooms are underfunded. There is a ton of evidence to show that is the truth.

Sexual abuse: This bill makes the revocation of teachers' licences mandatory when they are found guilty of any kind of sexual abuse involving students. As it currently stands, this process is under the purview of the disciplinary committee with the College of Teachers. Of course we agree that teachers who have engaged in any kind of sexual conduct with students should have their licence taken away.

However, this legislation gives us a number of contradictions. We're all in agreement that classrooms need to be safe and supportive, yet this government has repealed that curriculum and left a version from the 1990s in its place. This government is routinely putting students in positions where they are less safe, not more safe. The cornerstone of this curriculum is the notion of consent. It teaches students how to identify their own consent in a variety of situations. The sex education curriculum helped protect kids from abuse. It would help them identify abusive behaviour and help them protect themselves online. This is a glaring contradiction. The title of this bill, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, does not go far enough. Students are at risk due to the actions of this government. Children need to have the knowledge in order to identify and report abuse.

This August, 1,800 health care professionals signed a petition opposing the health and physical education curriculum rollback on the grounds that it jeopardized the health and well-being of children in Ontario. The Canadian Paediatric Society wrote to the Premier in July to express their concerns with the curriculum repeal. They said, "An out-of-date and incomplete sex ed curriculum is a potential source of harm for Ontario's children and youth, increasing the risk of misinformation, discrimination, disease and abuse." The member from Davenport highlighted many of the experts who supported a new, updated curriculum. But it wasn't just the experts; it was parents across the province and it was students who rallied at this building to protest the repeal. The actions of this government are not in promotion of safe and supportive classrooms.

This bill adds the new power to Ministry of Education to completely reorganize the College of Teachers. It allows the government to determine the composition of the council as well as its committees and panels. The College of Teachers is a regulatory body for the profession that acts independently from the government. That self-regulation is important because, as the college itself describes, “Self-regulation means that the government has delegated its regulatory functions to those who have the specialized knowledge necessary to do the job. The granting of self-regulation acknowledges a profession’s members are capable of governing themselves.”

The member from Niagara West, the other day, illuminated what the true purpose of this shift was. He indicated that it was to limit the number of teachers on their own self-regulating body. There is currently an ongoing internal governance review at the college which will include recommendations on the size and scope of the college’s council and its 14 committees. It raises the question: Why would the government make this kind of sweeping power grab even before seeing the recommendations of the internal governance review?

My concern with this legislation is that it does very little to fulfill its namesake. The legislation claims that it is in promotion of safe and supportive classrooms, yet this government cut \$100 million that was about to be used for school repairs. They’ve scrapped after-school and parent-led programs by cancelling their funding. They’ve cancelled math upgrading support for teachers. They’ve scrapped a curriculum that allows students the information they need to make safe choices, both online and in person. This past weekend, this party endorsed transphobic policies and attacks on trans rights. These are all dangerous positions that put children and young people in our province at risk.

Students should be safe at school; we all agree. However, many of the provisions in this bill do not target the issue. Cuts to continuing education funding for teachers further undermine the stated goals. There is no evidence to suggest that a test of this nature will improve test scores, and the ministry staff could not point to examples or evidence from other jurisdictions. It is unclear what grade level of math must be completed, what the instrument will look like, and if there will be exceptions implemented for teaching candidates who may not have specialized in mathematics.

I would like to also address in my final minute, Speaker, the fact—and many of the speakers have touched on it—that the \$1.4 billion that was promised by the previous Liberal government represented a bare minimum in funding required to meet routine maintenance and repairs in Ontario schools. This government, although they’re passing a bill that is called “safe and supportive classrooms,” is not doing the basic job they have to do, which is keeping the infrastructure in our schools at a point where children could go to school and be in a proper learning environment so they can learn mathematics and other subjects. They’re cold in the fall and spring. This is not the way that we create a safe and supportive environment in our schools.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: The health and well-being and safety of all of our children and students is this government’s number one priority. This government has said numerous times that we have zero tolerance—and let me repeat myself—zero tolerance for sexual abuse of Ontario students and children. At the end of the day, we want to make our schools and early years of child care settings safer than they’ve ever before.

Mr. Speaker, I find it difficult when I’m listening to comments from the opposite side of the House here—because this is a bill that is geared towards the safety of our children and the rights of our parents—taking shots at the government through consultation processes. This is about our kids. If you support the health and safety and well-being of Ontario’s children, then I ask everyone to support this bill. I ask everyone to stop politicizing the future of our children and to actually care about what matters most, which is ensuring that our kids can go to school in a safe environment and also ensure that our parents can send their children to school every day, knowing that they’re going to be safe, because that’s what matters most.

We’re talking about ensuring that parents have a say in knowing that their children are safe when they go to school. It’s also about ensuring that teachers are accountable for their actions and that there will be zero tolerance when it comes to any type of abuse of our children. We’re talking about making sure that our children have the tools they need to be able to learn in a safe and responsible way.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I fully support this bill, and I ask all members to stop politicizing the future of our children and come together to support this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: I’d like to thank my colleague from Niagara Falls for his comments.

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I think we’ve heard time and time again now about the state of disrepair of our schools. The campaign Fix Our Schools started in my riding, in Parkdale–High Park. Parents were frustrated by the lack of action by the government and got together to start the campaign. It started in Parkdale–High Park, grew across Toronto and now is across the province.

Fix Our Schools, together with our local school board, the Toronto District School Board, has a very, very simple proposal to the government in terms of trying to create a revenue source to fix our schools, and that is education development charges. We all know that when developers come into a community, currently there is no accountability to the community that they’re building in. In my neighbourhood—I live in High Park north, in the apartment neighbourhood there—there are seven new towers coming in. Seven new towers mean many more kids who are going to be coming into the neighbourhood who will need to go to their local schools, but our schools are already at capacity—they are at overcapacity. Now, everyone has

received a note—and there are notices stuck on a lot of these construction sites—where it clearly states that if you are going to be moving into this building, your kid will not be going to the local school. They will be bused somewhere else. Who knows where?

If the TDSB could collect education development charges—and it's a very simple regulation that the minister can change—then they would have a new revenue source that they can dedicate to fixing our schools. It is a drop in the bucket, but at least it is a start.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I wonder if the opposition should be reminded of the website again that they can go onto to voice their concerns.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: What is it?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's called fortheparents.ca. How many times can I say that in two minutes? Maybe we have to send them a card or something with that website on it.

The previous government only interviewed about a thousand people. Very few people were in on it. They formed all their legislation, they say, based on consultations with the public. Well, they didn't. There are more than a thousand parents or so in this province.

This consultation that's going on right now focuses on a wide range of people in Ontario. Anybody can get in on this. I believe the minister was telling me that in the first week, over a thousand people or something like that had already commented on things. What does the opposition have issue with? I think this is a great plan. This is a great way of doing things. Why would they object to something like this?

I listened to the speaker from Niagara Centre talk about math scores. We see the proof that math teaching is not working in this province in the kids who aren't passing it. It's incredible what's going on these days. Those children, if they get pushed through school not having learned the basic essentials—I call them the three Rs—when they go to apply for work or want to go to university, it's going to be difficult for them to do that. They have to know the basics of math, reading and writing in order to do these things. I have seen grown-ups who haven't done well in these things apply for a job. They get turned down because they can't add, they can't write and they can't read after they get through school. These things have got to be—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Yarde: I'm proud to stand here, and I'd like to thank my colleague from Parkdale–High Park for her comments recently.

If the Conservative government wants to provide safe and supportive classrooms to students, then you need to take action. You need to take action right now. Most class sizes are huge. If you go to classes, there are 30 or 40 students in classrooms. We already have overcrowded classrooms, and this is what we have to be looking at. In Brampton and other areas across the GTA, we're anticipating the construction and occupancy of more than

214,000 new residential units over the next 15 years and more than 313,000 new units by mid-2041. It's difficult for students to succeed in math—and any other subject, for that matter—when there's only one teacher for every 30 or more students in one classroom. That's the problem, Mr. Speaker. It's not about math; it's about the size of these classrooms.

Teachers right now don't have any time for one-on-one work with students. That is a concern I hear from a lot of parents, saying, "I'm sending my son or my daughter to school and they don't have one-on-one with the teachers." This is what the Conservatives should be looking at—not math scores, but lowering and making the classroom sizes much smaller. The root of the problem is not that teachers don't understand math; it's that classrooms are underfunded. And the government is taking that problem from bad to worse. We have to increase funding for the schools.

The representative on the other side mentioned that health and safety is important. But how is health and safety going to be fixed when students are going to schools that are cold in the wintertime and when they're going to schools that are hot in the summertime? That's another thing we have to look at.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We will now turn back to the member from Niagara Centre to wrap it up.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I'd like to thank the member from Parkdale–High Park, for her insights on education development charges—very insightful—and the member from Brampton North, for his issue with one-on-one time with students, which I think is also something that really needs to be looked at.

In terms of the comments from the member from Carleton, thank you for your comments. But she accuses us of politicizing the future of our children. Our job, just to bring everyone up to date—we're the opposition, so we're supposed to oppose and criticize legislation, especially when we disagree with it. That's our job. It's not politicizing it.

What we've actually asked is that this government stop politicizing things and coming at things from the point of view of ideology. We'd like them to start making evidence-based decisions instead of making up decision-based evidence. Time and time again, we see the absence of that from this government, from climate change denial to income inequality denial, green energy, sex ed, trans citizens, sick notes—I read the list before. They're coming at this from a point of view of ideology. It's time and time and time again of this government doing that, and we're standing here asking them: Show us the evidence. Show us the facts.

Here, they've presented a bill that they call "safe and supportive," and it doesn't even address the main issue that we should be talking about if we want to make our schools safe and supportive, which is making sure that the schools the kids go to school in aren't falling down, for God's sake. How does all this other stuff matter if all the schools are falling down? If the kids can't learn, how are they going to learn math? The member from Perth—

Wellington is talking about math scores. How are you going to improve math scores if the kids are sitting in a school that they're freezing in and the school is falling down around them? That is the case. How are they going to learn math in an environment like that?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to make some further comment on Bill 48, Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act. I wasn't expecting this. Maybe I can summarize a bit of what I've heard this afternoon.

I'm not coming at this from any ideology; maybe I'm coming at it from the perspective of a former high school teacher. When I was teaching, I focused on my subject area. It was agricultural and environmental science. I don't think we were thinking much about sexual abuse of students. I wasn't aware of that. It disturbs me, if it's taken this many years to address that.

We really weren't questioning math education at that time, either. I taught in the shop wing. We had auto, we had—it was a fantastic high school, Simcoe Composite School. We taught all the shops. It was wonderful. These guys—my students were all guys when I first started, and then it was optional for girls to take agriculture. That was kind of neat. At the time, I think we still had the home economics program. I don't think the guys took cooking courses or things like that, as I recall. For some reason, we were able—it was a very large high school; it was about 1,000 students—to offer a constellation of courses. But we really weren't worried about math or necessarily concerned about guide dogs coming into the school or concerned about abuse of students.

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Obviously, with a title like Safe and Supportive Classrooms, it's imperative that we require the discipline committees of both the Ontario College of Teachers and the College of Early Childhood Educators to revoke an educator's certificate if they have been found guilty under allegations of sexual abuse of a student, a child. That's why we have these discipline committees.

We will be beefing this up. I know in previous legislation—I think it was only a year or so ago we were talking about these things and dealing with very significant and inappropriate behaviour by teachers or, by extension, other employees of a school board. Our new government, the new administration, has felt that the previous government did not go far enough.

We will also, as I understand, provide regulation-making authority to the Lieutenant Governor in Council to prescribe other acts of a sexual nature prohibited under the Criminal Code which would result in a mandatory revocation of that educator's certificate.

We talked about, certainly this afternoon, the importance of ensuring that our students, let alone our teachers, have a fundamental knowledge of mathematics, something that's so important in the trades. Many of the fellows I taught went right into the trades, oftentimes set up with their father in a plumbing business. Many of the students

who graduated went right over to what was then the Texaco refinery or construction or Ontario Power Generation. The next year, they were making more money than I was as a teacher. I was always impressed with that. In fact, I had come into teaching from industry—kind of from punching a clock into what I considered a profession.

I sincerely hope that teaching remains a profession. I was a member of OSSTF. At that time, OSSTF was not necessarily union-driven; it was an association for us, an educational body in many ways. I had come in from punching a clock. I've always, again, felt the teaching profession was not a kind of clock-driven, hourly based, union-based profession. It's a true profession, in my view. That's my personal view—again, just drawing on my memories of teaching high school.

Service animals: We've talked about that this afternoon. To permit dogs in—I would assume that today we're mostly talking about dogs; we're not talking about snakes. I think we've laid that to rest. I did talk about snakes and seizures. I think that's not going to be an amendment to this particular legislation. But again, it's so important to further support our students with special needs across the province of Ontario.

Just going back to this issue with respect to the abuse of students, I understand this is in the works, perhaps through regulation, to provide funding after the fact, regrettably, for therapy and counselling for children or students who have alleged that they were subject to sexual abuse or an act of child pornography committed by an educator in the course of their job. This is not something that really squares with my fond memories of teaching in the high school system.

I know we make mention of students who have made allegations. There are two sides to the story. There can be false allegations. I don't know whether this is covered in this legislation. I think it was covered in the legislation by the previous government. For example, if somebody gets a bad mark, maybe they go home to their parents, they get in trouble, they blame the teacher and perhaps they could come up with a story. I hope this legislation, if it's not covered in previous legislation, offers that protection to teachers and other educators in the case of a false accusation, a situation where someone is wrongly accused.

It's so important, with respect to the mathematics side—I am jumping around a bit here—not only to be involved in STEM and the trades, but to be involved in very clearly keeping an eye on your credit card and perhaps down the road negotiating a mortgage and learning how to balance a chequebook.

I feel, obviously, from what I've heard this afternoon, that this legislation is overdue. I haven't really heard the opposition badmouthing it to any great extent other than talking about many things that are not in the legislation, and maybe there's room there for committee. There's always more work to do. There's always more legislation. This will not be our first piece of legislation to deal with our school system.

Again, keep it safe and keep it supportive, and we'll do our best to better enable young people to go out in the

world and get a real job—or maybe get elected; I don't know whether that's in the category of a real job or not.

Interjection: That's a real job.

Mr. Toby Barrett: That's a real job? Okay. We have consensus on that one, as well.

During debate, there was mention of a Toronto Star article earlier this year—I think it was in January of this year. Thank you to the Star for shedding a spotlight on this particular situation. A teacher had sexually harassed a colleague and was quietly shifted to another school. And then that teacher, according to the Star, was engaged in a significantly inappropriate relationship with a student. The teacher pleaded guilty to psychological and sexual abuse of the student, but the teacher's licence was not revoked, as I understand it.

There's obviously very clearly something wrong with this picture. An educational professional behaved in a seriously inappropriate manner and was shifted quietly to another school; the next time, it was a student. Why was

that not caught before? Will this legislation prevent that from happening?

There was a disciplinary hearing. The Ontario College of Teachers made a decision on this. There was a plea of guilty to psychological and sexual abuse. The disciplinary committee ordered that he be reprimanded. His licence was suspended for two years. He took some coursework on ethics, but didn't lose his licence to teach. There's clearly something wrong with that picture.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'd like to thank all members for taking part in the debate this afternoon, and for your well-behaved, professional approach this afternoon. Let's hope it continues tomorrow.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Unfortunately, the time for further debate has expired. Therefore, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)	Ajax	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakubski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Wayne Gates
Stan Cho, Jill Dunlop
John Fraser, Wayne Gates
Stephen Lecce, Gila Martow
Jane McKenna, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Lindsey Park, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Timothy Bryan

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Stephen Crawford
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
Ian Arthur, Stan Cho
Stephen Crawford, Doug Downey
Sol Mamakwa, David Piccini
Jeremy Roberts, Sandy Shaw
Donna Skelly
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Timothy Bryan

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permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Jessica Bell, Lorne Coe
Chris Glover, Christine Hogarth
Logan Kanapathi, Daryl Kramp
Natalia Kusendova, Amarjot Sandhu
Mike Schreiner, Dave Smith
Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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Nathalie Des Rosiers, Jill Dunlop
Parm Gill, Lindsey Park
Ross Romano, Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria
Sara Singh, Monique Taylor
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Amanda Simard, Gurratan Singh
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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Peggy Sattler
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Jim McDonnell, Norman Miller
Suze Morrison, Michael Parsa
Peggy Sattler, Kinga Surma
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