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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 24 October 2018

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 24 octobre 2018

The House met at 0900.

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

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 Waterloo has notified the Clerk of her intention to file notice of a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 47, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, the Labour Relations Act, 1995 and the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009 and make complementary amendments to other Acts.

The order for second reading of Bill 47 may therefore not be called today.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

ATTRIBUTION DE TEMPS

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 23, 2018, on the motion for time allocation of the following bill:

Bill 34, An Act to repeal the Green Energy Act, 2009 and to amend the Electricity Act, 1998, the Environmental Protection Act, the Planning Act and various other statutes / *Projet de loi 34, Loi abrogeant la Loi de 2009 sur l'énergie verte et modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité, la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement, la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire et diverses autres lois.*

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

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I am standing here today to show my concern about the decision on the part of the government to repeal the Green Energy Act. Ontario families, particularly in my riding of Mushkegowuk–James Bay, have shown their worry about what is to come. The decision on the part of the Conservatives is blatant denial of climate change, of the current solutions that we have at our disposal, and of the perils that the people in northern Ontario suffer and will continue to suffer unless something is done now.

En bref, quand on parle du changement climatique et des développements durables, les conservateurs nous emmènent vers l'arrière, dans le passé. Encore une fois, l'abrogation de cette loi démontre que les conservateurs nient carrément l'existence du changement climatique.

Again, this is the work of climate change deniers, whose interest does not quite seem to tap on the interests

of my constituents, who are suffering more and more the effects of climate change and greenhouse emissions.

A few months ago, I spoke about the children of Kashechewan, whose school was shut down as a result of chronic flooding. Let me remind you about the community of Kashechewan and their elementary school. Speaker, I visited the community of Kashechewan to see it with my own eyes. Their elementary school had to be shut down because the portables that have been in place for 10 years—that's right, 10 long years—are in ruins as a result of constant flooding. The portable structures have deteriorated so much that mold is pretty much everywhere. The floors are so uneven that you can barely walk on them and the doors simply don't close.

So much were their concerns about the state of the school that the commencement of the school year was postponed and the kids sent to the secondary school. Certainly the school portables are not meant to survive the weather in the region, which is a shame, but those climate conditions have become harsher and harsher, which makes the experience of children in Kashechewan all the more troublesome.

Vous savez, on s'est fait dire qu'à chaque année la glace fond de plus en plus vite, ce qui cause des menaces d'inondation ainsi que des vraies inondations à chaque printemps.

Climate change, that is, is causing the constant flooding of Kashechewan, thereby putting the safety of our children and their schools at stake.

What I saw during my visit wasn't simply the end result of poor school conditions; no, what I saw was the consequences of the Conservatives' inaction or denial of climate change. I encourage the Premier to travel sooner rather than later to the community of Kashechewan to see the conditions under which these children go to school, which, it is my hope, will make him realize that this is not simply about the school, but rather the first-hand experience of climate change affecting my riding.

It also seems that this Conservative government has a short memory since they have already forgotten the ravaging wildfires in the north this past summer, which has been the worst season on record in northeastern Ontario. Speaker, is this not the end result of rising temperatures and drier, extreme weather conditions? Is this not the result of climate change? This bill shows that the Conservative government has no interest in strengthening environmental protection to conserve our northern forests.

Also, it is troubling for the people in my constituency that the Conservatives are winding down the green programs. This government says that it will honour the

programs that had been signed that were funded by cap-and-trade, including the GreenON rebate programs. There is no week that passes without having someone coming into my constituency riding to complain about the slashing of the efficient insulation and window retrofit. What is to happen to the people who have started to build and renovate their homes, but were unable to apply for the program prior to the arbitrary deadline set by the Conservatives? Who's going to pay the bill? We all know that answer.

Not only is this bill a symbolic gesture, a pushback from the Conservatives to the NDP's sound environment platform, but it also fails to make hydro costs lower. What happened to the Conservative promise to serve Ontario's people? Rural and remote communities such as those in my riding feel victimized because this bill will do nothing for the environment, nor for their electricity bill.

But the Liberals' policy of privatization and deregulation of green energy, as much as the Conservative push to repeal the Green Energy Act, has failed and will fail to put a tap on increasing hydro costs and to protect our province's environment. In fact, I dare say the Conservatives are finishing the job that the Liberals have left undone.

As a matter of fact, and just to give you an example, the Green Energy Repeal Act tears down all regulations under the current act. This means that rural and remote communities will be bullied around by their private energy companies.

The NDP had an evidence-based platform concerning renewable energy and climate change. We have time and again pushed for not just a move toward renewable energy, but also towards a system that is sustainable, fair, effective, transparent and efficient.

0910

Mr. Speaker, what the Liberals and the Conservatives have done is to serve private interests and to make decisions behind closed doors.

The repeal of the Green Energy Act greatly affects the members of my constituency. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change tells us that human-made greenhouse emissions are at the heart of the climate change threat. Conservatives, purely and simply, deny this.

Let me just say this: What the Conservative government is doing is shrinking government, to the detriment of their responsibility to protect the environment in Ontario today, instead of working towards a low-carbon, greener and sustainable economy, as has been defended by the NDP.

Nous avons entendu dans cette Chambre le député de Kiiwetinoong qui a mentionné qu'une jeune fille autochtone s'est enlevé la vie à cause qu'elle demeurait dans une demeure où il n'y avait pas d'électricité—ce qui n'a pas aidé, à cause de l'électricité. Peut-être qui si la ligne d'hydro se rendait, on aurait eu de quoi de différent. Mais, son domicile, peut-être que les autres sources d'énergie—les énergies vertes—auraient adressées la situation de l'électricité pour sa demeure.

Le fait qu'un adversaire politique a failli avec ses politiques ne veut pas dire que tout est pourri. Dans cette situation, dites-moi où est le problème d'avoir une entente entre les communautés concernées et le gouvernement, avec de l'énergie verte, où on pourrait desservir les domiciles où ils n'ont pas d'électricité tout en protégeant l'environnement? Pourquoi est-ce que ça ne se ferait pas, de pouvoir utiliser des moulins à vent ou bien des panneaux solaires où il n'y a pas d'électricité dans ces communautés? Avoir des ententes avec les Premières Nations qui généreraient de l'argent pour les Premières Nations—qu'est-ce qu'il y a de mal avec ce portrait-là? Je ne le vois pas.

Le problème qu'on a, je pense que c'est ce que le confrère Bisson—excusez, le confrère de Timmins, le député de Timmins—nous a dit. Le problème était qu'on avait privatisé l'énergie verte. C'est pour ça que ça n'a pas fonctionné. Je pense, dans ce cas ici, ça serait une solution à un problème qu'on a dans les communautés du Nord, dans le Grand Nord, si je peux user du terme, où on pourrait emmener de l'énergie à bon coup et aussi protéger l'environnement et avoir de l'énergie verte.

Mais non, nous allons tout scraper une énergie où le reste de la planète se dirige et reconnaît comme une solution au réchauffement de la planète. À la grandeur de la planète, on reconnaît que l'énergie verte est la solution du futur. Mais pour une raison quelconque, notre gouvernement en Ontario, on est plus intelligent que les autres. On dit : « non, ce n'est pas la solution du futur », mais je pense qu'on fait fausse route. On nage à contre-courant quand on devrait travailler et adresser les problèmes du gouvernement précédent, où on a failli à avoir ce qu'on cherchait avec l'énergie verte.

Le gouvernement conservateur est-il tellement borné qu'il ne peut pas voir l'avenir de cette énergie verte directement lié à l'environnement? Je l'ai mentionné maintes et maintes fois : le réchauffement climatique est vrai et est relié à l'énergie verte. On n'a rien qu'à voir ce qui s'est passé dans ma circonscription avec tous les feux de forêt, les communautés qui ont été menacées, les communautés qui ont été déplacées.

On a de l'énergie verte dans ma circonscription qu'on a utilisée avec succès : les « dams » d'hydro. On a Lower Mattagami. On en a plusieurs. On en a trois dans ma circonscription. Je pense qu'on devrait en profiter, puis en faire plus, mais ne pas juste scraper l'énergie verte parce qu'on est borné, qu'on a fait une promesse, et qu'on dit aujourd'hui « promesse faite, promesse gardée ». Je pense que c'est une erreur. Il ne faut pas aller à contre-courant, mais avec le courant pour améliorer l'énergie puis protéger l'environnement.

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

Hon. John Yakubski: I hope I'm able to speak today, because my throat is a little challenged, but I'm going to do my best.

Before I speak, I want to remind the House that I'm wearing purple, because it certainly doesn't look very good matching here, but I've never once won the award

for best dressed person in the House of representatives here. I do want to point out that I'm wearing purple in recognition of Child Abuse Prevention Month. As a father and a grandfather and as someone, quite frankly, who rejoices every time a child is born, I want to emphasize that the greatest asset that we have is our children, and those children yet to be born. I want to make sure that whenever they are brought into this world, we do the very best we can to take care of them.

Speaker, to paraphrase Mark Antony, I come here to bury the Green Energy Act, not to praise it. It deserves no praise. I was the energy critic back in 2009 when George Smitherman, who lost another election the other night, introduced the Green Energy Act, one of the single most damaging pieces of legislation to Ontario's economy that has ever been brought forth. And he did it with the full support of the members on the other side, the NDP. In fact, when I hear the NDP speak in praise of the Green Energy Act, they are so conflicted within themselves—not just among themselves but within themselves, because they really haven't figured out where they stand on that.

When there are problems in one of their ridings—and I see the member from Essex here; he'll wax on about the problems with the windmills causing water damage and contamination of water wells. But then on the other hand they talk about how important that green energy was, because, you see, they've got their insiders, too, that have profited by it.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I know it's too complex for you to have a three-dimensional view on anything.

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

Hon. John Yakabuski: Well, the member for Essex likes to get himself a little worked up. He gets upset because he knows he is conflicted amongst himself. Because, you know, really, when I look at that side—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You're the picture of calm; you're the picture of reason.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock, please. All right, I am going to advise both sides right now that I caution both sides with regard to perhaps inflammatory comments, on both sides. We want to have civil debate in this House right now. We know the bill at hand and I would ask that all members take heed and go along with what I am suggesting.

I will now turn it back to the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I point out to the member from Essex that I was here in 2009. I was here when they brought in that act.

But when I think of the NDP and the Green Energy Act—of course, the blame has to go to the Liberals, and that's part of the reason the Liberals sit as a very small group today. But when I listen to the different things that I have heard over the years about the Green Energy Act from the NDP, to steal one of—my friend from Kenora—Rainy River likes to use a different name for the acronym NDP. This would be because they've twisted themselves up so badly on this. I would say they are the non-defined

pretzels because they have twisted themselves up so badly over this Green Energy Act: One moment, on one side of them, they're screaming and yelling about the problems they have in their own ridings because of wind development, and on the other hand they're talking about how nuclear should be shut down and we can power the province on simply renewable energy. Hell, the world could be powered on renewable energy.

They know they're absolutely wrong, but they continue to persist in it. And if there is any piece of legislation that they should be glad to see the end of, it is this piece of legislation, the Green Energy Act. They should be glad to see it's gone because then they don't have to worry anymore about being so duplicitous when it comes to talking about the Green Energy Act.

0920

Let's talk about the damage that it did. In 2009, George Smitherman came forth with the Green Energy Act. We said at the time this would be an economic disaster. In fact, we had a study completed by a consulting firm called London Economics International, which specializes in this kind of thing. They specialize in it. They came back to us and said it would mean at least \$40 billion in overcharges for electricity to the consumers in Ontario because of the enactment of the Green Energy Act. Once the government revealed what its feed-in tariff was going to be and what they were going to be willing to pay for different types of generation, it was \$40 billion.

Now, in 2015, the auditor said that Ontario electricity ratepayers had already paid \$37 billion too much for green energy—\$37 billion by 2015—and that they would be subject to paying another \$137 billion in excess over the next 25 years.

Interjection: It was \$133 billion.

Hon. John Yakabuski: It was \$133 billion?

Interjection: Yes.

Hon. John Yakabuski: Thanks for contradicting me. I appreciate that. As C.D. Howe would say, "What's a billion?" To the NDP and the Liberals, a billion wouldn't mean very much. The Liberals certainly didn't seem to worry what the cost of that was going to be to future generations and businesses in this province. We told them that would happen.

I remember when we were talking about this in the House and George Smitherman walked across from this side of the House to that side of the House, which I was sitting on at the time. He passed me a handwritten note and it said, "The Green Energy Act and everything we're doing in it will only add 1% per year to your electricity bills."

Now, ask yourself, how could you in good conscience, knowing what you're going to get out of that Green Energy Act and the prices they were willing to pay, write a handwritten note like that? It was because they were absolutely fixated on what they wanted to do. You see, they had rushed, in their zeal, to try to prove that they were the environmental party. They rushed, in their zeal, to shut down the coal plants. They knew that in order to do that, they had to have something else to deal with. All along,

they were building new natural gas plants, but pretending that the coal plants were being shut down because of bringing in more renewable power. They offered prices such as 80.2 cents a kilowatt hour for roof-mounted solar.

I remember in the 2011 election, the Liberal candidate in my riding was singing the praises of roof-mount solar, and he said that even Gerald Tracey, the editor, now publisher, of the Eganville Leader believed in it, because he had put solar panels on the roof of the Eganville Leader printing office. And Gerald said, “Well, yes, because if somebody is stupid enough to pay me 80 cents a kilowatt hour, I’m smart enough to take it.”

They were in a rush to get so many subscribers over-subscribed—everybody wanted to get in on it. But what did it do to the price of electricity in this province? It just drove it up unconscionably, to the point where people had to make choices: Do we eat or do we heat? That became a catchphrase. It wasn’t invented by us in this party. It was coined by people out there who had to rely on food banks because they could not pay their electricity bills.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Jennifer in Ottawa.

Hon. John Yakabuski: Jennifer in Ottawa, I say to my friend from Nipissing, the Minister of Finance. Thank you, Jennifer from Ottawa, because you were the one who said first, “I have to choose as to whether I heat or I eat because of my hydro bills”—and all along, the New Democrats, who are now trying to block us in every way from passing this legislation so we can move on from a very dark time in this province’s history, when hydro rates went up by over 300%. This is a big part of it, and we’re getting rid of it.

I remember when Mr. Smitherman came back here and had this plan for this Green Energy Act. Amazingly, it coincided with a recent trip he had made to Korea. He was honoured in Korea, given some kind of award for his commitment to renewable energy. Lo and behold, the next thing you know, they’ve got massive contracts signed with Samsung. Coincidence?

Mrs. Robin Martin: I think not.

Hon. John Yakabuski: Well, you have your answer. I don’t have to; my colleagues have answered it for me.

When you have that kind of a questionable relationship, where a minister is being honoured in a country that is going to be very well financially rewarded, their businesses, by building wind power here in the province of Ontario, it certainly sounds a little bit suspicious to me.

What happened? Well, there was this move to build, build, build wind. The government realized that when they looked into the communities, the people said, “We don’t want that. We should have the right to determine whether or not we accept that kind of development within our municipal borders.” We brought in different motions. We brought in different private members’ bills. We tried to force the government to get municipal consent. I don’t remember the member from Essex supporting us in that legislation.

Speaker, when they had the chance to give municipalities the right—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You haven’t done it in this legislation.

Hon. John Yakabuski: Well, I can say to the member from Essex: This is a repeal. Maybe you should try to understand things a little better.

They had the opportunity to give municipalities the right to say no. We fought for that. The Liberals said no. It drove a wedge right in the middle of communities where you had those people who were being offered massive amounts of money to give a wind developer the right to build on their property because they were getting paid so much money from the government. The money to the wind developer was so excessive that they could afford to pay excessive amounts to a landowner in order to build on their property. But it drove a wedge right in the middle of communities. When municipal councils tried to fight back, they were told, “No, we’ll make the decision here in the corner office at Queen’s Park.”

Then, it finally got to the Liberals a little bit and they made some adjustments: “We’ll talk to the municipalities. We will consult. We must consult.” You know what “consult” means to the Liberals? “We’ll have a chat and then we’re going to do what we’re going to do anyway.” It’s sort of like what Judge Roy Bean used to say: “Of course I believe in fair trials. We’re going to give that man a fair trial, and then we’re going to hang him.” That’s how the Liberals felt about municipalities when it came to the Green Energy Act and their right to determine what would happen within their borders.

But not only did they play footsie with the idea of giving municipalities some opportunities to be involved in the decision, they actually then allowed developers to go directly to municipal councils and offer money to the municipality for the right to build within their borders. So now you had further division within the communities. Now you had municipal councils that were struggling to meet their financial obligations as municipalities so that they could build their roads, so that they could pick up the trash, so that they could maintain their recreational programs, and all of the various other things that municipalities are responsible for. Then they looked at this leprechaun coming in with the pot of gold saying, “Hey, you let us build these turbines and we’re going to give you money.” So now the municipalities were further conflicted. They weren’t only being told that, “You still can’t make the decision, but the developers, who we’re overpaying”—they’ve got money coming out of their yingyang—“are going to be able to bribe you.” Essentially, the developers could bribe the municipalities to get them built.

0930

It never happened in my riding. I will give a lot of credit to the people in my riding who fought against it tooth and nail. My county council was united in saying, “We are not going to stand and have this happen here in Renfrew county,” but neighbouring counties did have that battle.

You have to ask yourself, if you had to do all of those kinds of things, what would be the net result of it? The net result would be that electricity would cost a whole lot

more, because by the very nature of wind, it is the most unreliable source of electricity generation out there. It's absolutely unreliable because we are totally dependent upon what nature gives you—totally dependent. When the wind doesn't blow, you get nothing. If the wind blows too hard, you have to shut the turbines down because of the possible damage to the turbines themselves. So you've got this sweet spot where you can take the energy that's developed by those windmills.

Interjection: At eight cents.

Interjection: Eleven.

Hon. John Yakabuski: It was actually up to 13.5. So if you're willing to pay that kind of price, you'll get your power.

Furthermore, they inserted into that act a guarantee that if wind was in the system, then wind would be bought. So in the spring, when the freshet was coming through and our hydroelectric stations were dealing with an abundance of water that nature was giving them free of charge, from the spring melt and the water running down those rivers, what were we doing? We were letting the water pass by the turbines, getting nothing out of it, because we were contractually obligated to take the power from the wind. But who was to pay? The ratepayer. The ratepayer would pay whatever the contracts were for regardless if we needed it.

Then we further complicated it, because the spring and the fall are your lowest demand periods for power. So then we would have this other situation where, even though we were taking the power from the wind, we couldn't use it. The electricity system works like this: You can only put into the system what the system can use. There is no ability to store. So then what we had to do, on top of that, is figure out, when we got too much coming in, what we were going to do with it: "Hello, Mr. Quebec. We've got too much power." "Sure, we'll take your power. How much are you going to pay us to take it?" "What? Well, let's try New York. Oh, same thing." You see, Speaker, we had to try to get rid of our power to neighbouring jurisdictions through the interties we have between provinces and international as well. We were in situations where sometimes we would get a little bit of money for the electricity—

Interjection: Pennies.

Hon. John Yakabuski: —pennies—and sometimes we actually had to pay them to take it. We would actually have to pay the other jurisdiction to take our power.

Now, put this math, Speaker: Let's just say, for the sake of argument, that we were getting two cents a kilowatt hour from the province of Quebec, the state of New York or Ohio, but we were paying 13.5 cents or 80.2 cents or 44 cents, if it was a ground-mount. We were paying excessive amounts for that power and giving it away. But do you know where that went, that gap that wasn't made up? It went onto your electricity bill. It just continued to drive the price of electricity higher and higher and higher.

Then the Liberals decided, "You know what? We have done everything we can to cloud the situation here, but we know that electricity rates will kill us in the next election. Let's come up with another plan." So then they came up

with this Fair Hydro Plan, which was going to lower the rates by 30%. However, we were going to refinance it so that it doesn't actually show on the books of the province of Ontario, but you will be paying for this. We're going to save money in the short run—a few billion dollars. It's going to cut the prices of your hydro by a few billion dollars over the short run. But over the next 30 years, you're going to be paying exponentially more in order to make up for that. It's sort of like taking your house, and you had a 20-year mortgage and you decide, "Okay, let's run the mortgage for 100 years." By the time that 100 years is up, you will have paid for that house about seven times, or whatever; I haven't done the math. But you will have paid for it many, many times over because of the cost of carrying that borrowing.

The Financial Accountability Officer and the Auditor General: They all came up with the same conclusion. But this was the Liberals' last-ditch effort to try to take the hydro bill out of being a ballot box question in 2018. They were completely—I'm trying to think of a word that wouldn't be unparliamentary.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Rejected.

Hon. John Yakabuski: Well, they were certainly rejected in the election.

They weren't straight with the people of Ontario when they told them what this was going to be. They never, ever voluntarily told the people what this was going to mean to their hydro bills over the long term. One thing I'll say: The people of Ontario do their own thinking as well. They realized that the future of their children and their grandchildren—those children I talked about when I first started speaking this morning. Those children's future is going to be jeopardized by the actions of that government.

So here we are today, ending the Green Energy Act. This government campaigned on the promise to put an end to the Green Energy Act. It campaigned on a promise to lower your hydro bills. Ending the Green Energy Act is one of the primary components of that promise.

Gord Campbell said to the select committee yesterday something to the effect of, "In order to get out of a hole, the first thing you've got to do is stop digging." You can't change the course of action until you actually stop going in the wrong direction. That's another way of putting it.

We had to absolutely end this Green Energy Act, so we brought in this bill, which matches one of our promises: that we would not allow this to continue in the province of Ontario. Promise made, promise kept.

Speaker, the NDP over there want to talk about the carbon tax. They love the idea of taxes. They just think taxes are great. You see, they believe that nobody is better at making the decisions on how to spend money than the government. They believe that if the government has the money, it will always do the right thing. The government will make the right decisions. Well, we certainly come from a different way of thinking. We believe that if the people have the money in their pockets, they will make the right decisions, and they have the right to make those decisions.

0940

Absolutely nothing that the Liberals were doing with the so-called cap-and-trade carbon tax was actually even intended to reduce greenhouse gases. It was intended for one reason: to take money out of the pockets of most of the people to try to buy the votes of some of the people, with green programs that were directed at one segment of the population, but that most people couldn't share.

We'll have another chance another time, I'm sure, to talk about the NDP and their carbon tax plans, and the Liberals and their carbon tax plans, and Justin Trudeau and his carbon tax plans. This UN report that I hear the NDP talking about wanted to see carbon taxes at \$5,000 a tonne. That's the kind of stuff the NDP is supporting: \$5,000 a tonne. It would drive the price of a litre of gasoline to \$17 a litre. That's the kind of stuff—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Make it an even \$30.

Hon. John Yakabuski: Well, they weren't even talking about the reports, so they must support it.

Anyway, Speaker, my time is just about up, but I'm sure the people on the other side can't wait. But we'll be back. Today is the time and the NDP should actually be 100% behind us, saying goodbye, saying au revoir, saying rest in peace to the Green Energy Act, so they don't have to look so duplicitous anymore.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It is always a pleasure to weigh in. Like for my colleague the Minister of Transportation, this is not any celebration or concern, except getting rid of this act. Since I have been here, in 2011, with many of my colleagues, we have campaigned on this. We said we would do it, and again, promise made, promise kept.

This is a cost of \$133 billion to Ontarians over the life of the Green Energy Act, money that could be going to hospitals, schools, long-term-care facilities or the less fortunate for social programs. This is taking money out of the pockets of Ontarians with the highest energy rates in the country.

We've lost numerous jobs, Mr. Speaker. When they brought this out, the Liberal Party and the NDP who have enabled them were talking about a whole new industry. They were going to create all these jobs. In fact, we've lost four jobs for every purported one that they've created over its life already, which is unacceptable.

They stripped local municipalities of the authority to say whether they wanted wind turbines sited in their communities. I remember my colleague from Elgin-Middlesex-London, now the Minister of Natural Resources—he has a community called Dutton Dunwich. They actually said, "We do not want it here." But the government came in and said, "Sorry about your luck. They're going here." I can't remember the name of the community right next door. They did want them and never ended up with any, Mr. Speaker. So you knew again that they weren't looking out for the realities of what people in Ontario wanted or communities wanted. They were going down a path because they had people who were telling them where they wanted this Green Energy Act.

At the end of the day, this is intermittent power at best. As many of my colleagues have said, we're totally on board with making sure we have climate plans. The Minister of the Environment is going to come out with a very balanced, practical plan that's affordable for the people of Ontario. That will come. We have to look at what the sources are.

Some of the NDP want to get rid of nuclear, one of the cleanest, greenest forms of power, providing all kinds of exceptional, good, well-paying jobs. It's baseload energy with good, union-paying jobs, Mr. Speaker, certainly in the backyard of my colleague the Minister of Education, from Huron-Bruce. In her riding, Bruce Power has 4,500 full-time employees. They're going to refurb six more units. They've already done two successfully, for that baseload power that's going to ensure our businesses have good, low-cost energy going forward. It's going to create another 20,000 jobs across the province, to all of those companies. I believe we're now up to 33 different companies that have relocated to my community of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and neighbouring Huron-Bruce. There's a ripple effect, because we have communities in Cambridge, we have businesses all over the province supporting this nuclear refurbishment. Let's just remind people here: That money is all from the private sector. That's not government money; that money is borrowed from the private sector. They are coming in and doing that job and they're creating those jobs that are going to have a huge ripple effect for our economy.

So this Green Energy Act—many people have come to me and said, "Finally, a government that listens." For 15 years, the Liberals were not paying attention. They would not listen to the people of Ontario, certainly in our municipalities, so I'm pleased to see that that is there.

Again, sadly, the damage has already been done by much of the actions that they had taken. Many businesses have left. We have 350,000 manufacturing jobs that were lost as a result, particularly to the energy policy. It was really an energy experiment by the Liberals, supported all the time by the NDP, the official opposition. They can say what they wish, but they have to go back to their voting record and know that they did that.

We're pleased to see that we've actually taken control of that and we have given back that authority. We promised; we campaigned and said that we would get rid of the Green Energy Act, and I am pleased to say that that act will be gone. We're going to give people back the ability. We're going to go back to an energy policy that makes sense for all Ontarians. We're going to have low-cost power going forward so we can, again, open Ontario back up for business.

One of the biggest concerns of businesses in my riding and, I'm sure, all the ridings across Ontario—they come and say, "We need stability." We used to be the lowest-cost energy producer on the continent. Certainly, in Canada, we were the economic engine partly because of that. We had a thriving, booming manufacturing sector because of those low rates. Businesses need to be able to bank on those rates, and they need to understand those.

The global adjustment for certain businesses was five, 10 times higher than what the actual cost of their energy was. How does a business bank on that? How do they understand, going forward, how we're going to maintain our business and expand our business if they can't rely on rates that are going to be there?

Because of that intermittent source—that's one of the biggest concerns, I've always said. You can't predict when the sun's going to shine and you can't predict when the wind's going to blow. At the end of the day, what they do is fire up gas plants. Even from the environmental perspective, how can they actually stand there and say that this was a good thing when you know that's going to happen?

The first thing the Liberal government would do on days when we didn't need as much power—and we didn't need as much power because they chased 350,000 manufacturing jobs out of the country; many businesses relocated—is turn off Niagara Falls, our freest, cleanest, greenest form of power, at three cents per kilowatt. The highest point of solar was 82 cents a kilowatt. Nobody can make sense of why you would continue to do that.

We have always challenged it. We've always said that it never made sense from a business perspective; it certainly didn't make sense from a math perspective.

If I go back to that \$133 billion, what could we have done? We have a program called SWIFT that's trying to bring Internet and broadband across southwestern Ontario to level the playing field and ensure that we actually have businesses that can thrive and grow and create more good-paying jobs in the future. What did they do? They went and spent \$133 billion on the Green Energy Act, the highest, again, in the country.

Then they went out and they borrowed \$25 billion for the fair hydro act, which is going to cost these pages and the next generation between \$43 billion and \$93 billion to pay back—money not going to our hospitals, money not going to our schools, money not going to our colleges and universities, and certainly not going to our social services sector. As a result, I have many people coming through my doors saying, "I'm really struggling with this." Special medications aren't being provided, in many cases, because we're spending money on the Green Energy Act.

The surplus alone—many people out there still say, "We give power to the United States and Quebec." Sadly—and it's painful to even share this with people—we're not actually giving them power; we're actually paying them to take our surplus power, making their businesses doubly competitive against our businesses here in the great province of Ontario.

I'm pleased to say we came in and said that we're getting rid of that. We're going to give certainty back to people and know that we're actually going to address the challenges of hydro. We're not just going to do like the Liberals did, in a Hail Mary for the election, and borrow \$25 billion and try to give people a reimbursement for two years and make them feel good and that everything is going in the right direction. They never, with any of that money, actually addressed any of the hydro challenges—

the systemic challenges of the hydro system that they have ruined, frankly.

They have been enabled, for my 15 years here—I have only been here seven, but before that they were as well. The NDP did vote for most of those budgets and enabled them with a lot of this legislation.

0950

I can't tell you how many people have called me who are municipal politicians, and I congratulate all the people who put their name on a ballot in the last couple of days. I applaud those who were elected and I applaud those who weren't elected because they still had the courage to put their hand up and do that. I've had many of those municipal councillors who have lived through that reign of 15 years and the Green Energy Act and saw the damage it was doing. The little grocery stores in many of our small, rural communities have been under siege. They're losing jobs. They're having to lay people off at the end of the day. Some have lost jobs because they can't take 30% and 40% increases in their hydro and still stay there.

Many seniors—we've heard in this House over and over again how many people were coming to a choice of heating versus eating, and that's unacceptable over something that was never a true, proper business plan that could be justified.

At the end of the day, we need to make sure that whenever we're setting policy and legislation, we are thinking of Ontarians. We want to open Ontario back up for business. We want to create full-time, good-paying jobs because that's the way we bring ourselves back to a province of prosperity, when everyone has that job and that hope to get up in the morning to be able to come back. I'm pleased to see that we, as a government, are starting to enact legislation that will do that sooner than later.

We need to ensure that every day—I believe my colleague the Minister of Transportation said that one of the biggest challenges when you're in a hole is to stop digging. We've stopped that digging but we're going a step beyond with the Green Energy Act and saying we have to get rid of that act and we can't allow it to go out to its end and do that damage.

I can't state it enough: \$133 billion. That's still only ever at the best day, the most opportunistic, the best quality of day that they're going to have with the sun and wind—it's going to be 5% of our grid. They went down the path of \$133 billion into that. Think of what we could do in health care with \$133 billion. Think of what we could do in education with \$133 billion. Think of what we could do in long-term care with \$133 billion. What could we do with accessibility with \$133 billion and certainly, at the end of the day, our social service programs—the people who are most in need. What could we have given to them for \$133 billion?

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: I hear someone who is not in their own seat heckling me, who always purports to stand up—why wouldn't she stand with us and actually want to turn this around and vote with us to ensure that that money can certainly come back? Through you, Speaker, I'd like to

share that with the person who is not in their seat but is heckling over there. I'd like that person to stand up and support us and give people out there hope. I don't know how she could justify, in her critic portfolio, that she would support the Green Energy Act and see \$133 billion going to subsidies rather than to people in the very most trying times of their lives, and the most needy, some of those people, in their lives. You would hope she would show leadership to the official opposition and vote with us, to say this is a good thing that that is gone. They can repair a bit of their past ills by saying, "You know what? We understand and we are with you on this bill."

It is my hope that when we come to this vote, it will go. We will be passing this, the Green Energy Repeal Act. I hope people out there understand that we're doing this. We're going to bring a new energy and environmental plan out that will show people that it's practical, it's balanced, and it ensures that people have the ability—

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: Good point: The agricultural sector has been impacted by the Green Energy Act. The manufacturing and the steel sectors have been impacted by the Green Energy Act.

From day one when I got elected, I fought against the Green Energy Act. It was an experiment, at best, that the Liberals tried to purport to line the pockets of their well-heeled friends. Sadly, the NDP enabled them on those votes. I'm pleased that the Green Energy Act will be gone and we'll give democracy back to local municipalities where it belongs.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: A few seconds on this: I hope the government realizes that the main problem with what the Liberals did with green energy was the privatization of the green energy sector. While we were forced to buy energy from private green sector generators, the province let our own public water go over the dams. I hope they realize it. Privatization is what is hurting the hydro customers in this area, not specifically green energy.

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

Hon. Todd Smith: It's my pleasure to stand in my place today and talk about the death of the Green Energy Act. It's something that I have been campaigning for in the seven years that I've been a member of provincial Parliament at Queen's Park. The Green Energy Act will go down in history as the biggest con job in the history of governments in Ontario. It has been a travesty for our rural communities. It has caused electricity prices to skyrocket to the highest in North America. I, for one, and the members of the Bay of Quinte community, couldn't be happier to see this day finally come and to put the Green Energy Act to rest once and for all.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Smith, Bay of Quinte, has moved government notice of motion number 13 relating to allocation of time on Bill 34, An Act to repeal the Green Energy Act, 2009 and to amend the Electricity Act, 1998, the Environmental Protection Act,

the Planning Act and various other statutes. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

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

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Orders of the day.

Hon. Todd Smith: No further business at this time, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): There being no further business at this time, I then declare that this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 0957 to 1030.

VANDALISM OF CONSTITUENCY OFFICE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Leader of the Opposition on a point of order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you very much, Speaker. I just want to rise on behalf of the MPPs in the official opposition benches to express our shock and dismay at what occurred in the Minister of Labour's constituency. The vandalism that was experienced by our colleague the Minister of Labour is absolutely unacceptable and we condemn this action unequivocally.

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: As Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, I'd like to welcome the Chicken Farmers of Ontario to Queen's Park.

I would also like to invite all members of the House to attend the chicken farmers' event this evening in the legislative dining room at 5 p.m. Those on House duty are welcome at 6:05.

Mr. John Vanthof: On behalf of the NDP caucus and my leader, Andrea Horwath, I'd also like to welcome the Chicken Farmers of Ontario here today. They're a very important part of our sector and of supply management, and we will be there to support you.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to introduce R.J. Taylor, my constituent and the co-owner of Cedar Crest Trout Farm, with his sister, Arlen; Susan Cole, also my constituent and a representative with the Ontario Aquaculture Association; and Craig Hughson, with Aurora Strategy Group. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to introduce a few people from Myeloma Canada. Myeloma is a cancer of the plasma cells that affects over 8,000 Canadians each year. We have Martine Elias, Steve Beattie, Sharon Aloian, Aldo Del Col, Robin Sully, Nina Rapoport, Norma Lindner, David McMullen, Patrick Taylor, Evelyn McDowell and Bob McCaw. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'd like to welcome my constituent Christine Reno from CBI Health Group in Guelph, who is here with Home Care Ontario today.

I'd also like to welcome the co-deputy leader of the Green Party of Ontario, Abhijeet Manay, who is here visiting at Queen's Park today.

On behalf of the Green Party of Ontario, I'd like to also welcome the Chicken Farmers of Ontario to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce some constituents of mine: Kevin Gilbert, Richard and Teresa De Wetering and Margaret and Harry De Wetering. They're sitting in the west gallery. John Chapman, over here, is sitting in the east gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: In the members' gallery, we have members of the board from the Retired Teachers of Ontario, who are also hosting a luncheon for MPPs following question period in rooms 228 and 230.

I would like to welcome all of the following members: Jacqueline Violet Aird, Paul Brazeau, Martha L. Foster, Richard Goodbrand, James P. Grieve, Mary Estelle Louise Guérin, Graham Martin Higgs, William Harry Huzar, David C. Kendall, Simon L. Leibovitz, Gayle Manley, Richard Prophet and Roger Régimbal. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park people from Home Care Ontario whom I visited with this morning: Stephanie Hayes, Gaye Moffett, Jay Turner, Jonathan Rose and Sue VanderBent. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Today is School Bus Driver Appreciation Day, as part of School Bus Safety Week. We'd like to welcome the Independent School Bus Operators Association, in particular, executive director Brian Crow and vice-president Rob Murphy.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa Centre—Ottawa South. I apologize.

Mr. John Fraser: They get us confused all the time.

I would like to welcome Alvin Tedjo, who was our candidate in Oakville North—Burlington—he's here today in the gallery—and also my friends from Home Care Ontario, for being with us here today and helping to educate all the brand new members in the House about what they do here in Ontario.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I'm pleased to introduce one of my top volunteers from my campaign, Braedan de Bakker, who is also a Carleton University student and the director of campus activism for Carleton's Conservatives. Welcome to Queen's Park, and thank you for your work on my campaign.

Hon. John Yakabuski: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today Chuck Sandrelli, who is the operator of Valley Transportation in my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. He's here for School Bus Driver Appreciation Day. Thank you very much, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Today, I would like to welcome a good friend of mine, Joanne Becke, and her daughter, Elizabeth Becke, from Mississauga—Lakeshore.

Mrs. Amy Fee: I have the honour of welcoming a few guests today in the gallery: Deanne Allain and the service dog that she's training for Autism Dog Services, Carlin. My nanny, Kristi Ostrander, is here and also my son Kenner Fee is here for his fourth question period but his first time with me as a member. He has his service dog, Rickman, with him as well.

Mr. Dave Smith: I would like to welcome Sally Harding, a member of my riding. She's also a member of Home Care Ontario as well.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to correct the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound: Susan Cole is a constituent of my riding for the majority of her time. Welcome to the Legislature.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I also want to welcome the people from Home Care Ontario who are here today and their executive director, Sue VanderBent, and thank them for the beautiful breakfast this morning.

Mr. Roman Baber: I'd like to welcome, seated in the east public gallery, students from grade 10 at Madonna Catholic high school, located in York Centre in north Toronto. Welcome.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I know there have been many welcomes already, but I would also like to say to the members of Home Care Ontario who are here today: Welcome to Queen's Park. We're very glad you're here.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I would like to introduce Robin Sully, Nina Rapoport and Norma Lindner, who are at Queen's Park today with Myeloma Canada. I look forward to meeting them later this afternoon.

Mr. Doug Downey: I'd like to introduce several people from the Appraisal Institute of Canada. It's in its 80th year. Jim Rokeby, Steven Rocca, Lora Wylie, Dawn Powell, Kevin Reid and Shardul Jani: Welcome.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to thank all of the members in the House today who are wearing purple for Child Abuse Prevention Month. I'd like to seek unanimous consent for members of this House to wear purple ribbons for Child Abuse Prevention Month. I would also like to thank the finance minister for wearing purple today.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The minister is seeking unanimous consent of the House to permit members to wear purple today. Agreed? Agreed.

The member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker. Professional Engineers Ontario are meeting here today and want to welcome everybody to their reception tonight in room 228.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. Just in case there's somebody in the House who wasn't introduced and welcomed to Queen's Park today, welcome to Queen's Park, everybody else.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We appreciate that.

I wish to join the member for Perth—Wellington in welcoming guests who are in the Speaker's gallery today. They are the family of page captain Sophia Ruffolo—Sophia's parents, Paul and Glenna Ruffolo, and her

grandmother Jean Pfeffer, all visiting from Mount Forest; her uncles Michael Ruffolo and Wayne Kit Sujo from Toronto; and the mayor of Wellington North, newly re-elected Mayor Andy Lennox, and his son James Lennox from Damascus. Paul and Andy are former classmates of mine from Arthur District High School. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question is to the Deputy Premier. Late yesterday evening, after reporters headed home for the day, the government dropped a bombshell on three communities in the GTA. For years, Milton, Markham and Brampton have been planning for university campuses in their communities to provide opportunity for their children and to train a future workforce for their growing economies.

Last night, this government pulled the plug on those dreams in the dead of the night. What justification can they offer for this decision?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. We promised the people of Ontario to restore accountability and trust in Ontario's finances. Part of that process means making tough decisions about projects across Ontario. Our government is being forced to clean up the irresponsible and reckless financial decisions of the previous Liberal government. We know now, thanks to the independent commission of inquiry, the depths of the waste and mismanagement of the previous Liberal government.

To describe the previous government's actions, the Auditor General used words like "conceal," "bogus," "deceptive" and "unreliable." In an election year, they made promises—empty promises—to Ontarians for programs and projects they knew they could not afford, leading to a \$15-billion deficit, while hiding the costs from the public. The Liberals have shattered the trust of Ontarians—

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

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I want to quote one local expert on the importance of these campuses. Speaking of the new York University campus in Markham, he said:

"Here are just a few numbers of the impact the new campus will make:

"—4,200 students ... will have access to teaching, learning and research.

"—400-plus on-campus jobs ...

"—\$500 million in economic benefits ...

"The ... campus will benefit many residents of Markham and York region, allowing them to gain the skills and knowledge in order for them to be part of the 21st-century economy of Ontario."

That expert was PC MPP Billy Pang, the member for Markham–Unionville, who was speaking in this House just weeks ago. Why is this government depriving these communities of economic investment and opportunity for their kids?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Our government was elected to restore accountability and trust in Ontario's finances, and that's exactly what we're doing. Due to the independent commission of inquiry, the depths of the waste and mismanagement of the previous Liberal government are now clear. In an election year, the Liberals made empty political promises to Ontarians for programs and projects they knew the province could not afford, hiding the costs from the public and creating the \$15-billion deficit that Ontario has today.

The Liberals shattered the trust of Ontarians, and our focus is on cleaning up the irresponsible and reckless financial decisions of the previous government and restoring trust and accountability in Ontario's finances.

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, the former government may have shattered people's trust—and I agree with that—but this government is shattering their dreams. These are growing communities that deserve post-secondary opportunities for their kids. But now that the votes are counted, this government seems to think that they're second class.

PC candidates spent the last campaign promising that these campuses would go ahead. During the campaign, the MPP for Milton said, "We will do everything we can to make this project a reality ... whether it takes \$90 million or there's more we need to do." The MPP for Markham actually went to the groundbreaking ceremony of the new Markham campus. I guess this truly is a case of promises made, promises broken.

Why did the government break their word to the parents and students in these communities who were promised a university?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for that question. Quite frankly, I reject the premise of the question.

We have been clear that this government is committed to the enhancing of financial accountability and transparency. The previous Liberal government, propped up by the NDP, who supported them on 97% of their votes, made empty promises in an election year for programs and projects that they knew they could not afford, leading to a \$15-billion deficit while hiding the cost from the public.

The Liberals shattered the trust of Ontarians. Our focus is on restoring trust and accountability in Ontario's finances, and that is what we will do.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Deputy Premier. Working people in Ontario are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet. They find too many of today's jobs are unreliable and underpaid. They're looking to their government to ensure that they have basic benefits and that they get an honest day's pay for an honest day's work. Instead of providing that, this government announced their plans yesterday to take basic benefits away.

Can the Deputy Premier explain why a woman working full-time on the minimum wage should have her wages frozen?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Jim Wilson: Thank you for the question. As the honourable member will know, we promised to make Ontario open for business, and yesterday was a great big step in the right direction to do just that.

While the party opposite might be concentrating—as the Liberals did for 15 years, propped up by the NDP—on propping up a minimum wage economy, we need to get beyond that. We need to get better jobs, better-paying jobs. We can't give up on our manufacturing sector. They gave up on our manufacturing sector. Premier Ford, I, our caucus and our party are going to revive those jobs in manufacturing and our industrial sector. To do that, we needed to get rid of the job-killing parts of Bill 148, and that's what we did—

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, working people aren't asking for luxuries. They're asking for the bare-minimum basics: to take a sick day without having to lose a day's pay, to enjoy their day off without being ordered to show up for a shift for fear of losing their job, to make a living wage of \$15 an hour. Most employers who I meet are happy to extend these basic benefits to their staff. Why is the government rolling back these basic benefits?

Hon. Jim Wilson: Speaker, we're not rolling back the basic benefits. If an employer wants to extend those benefits, they're perfectly happy to do so, and a lot of employers are. By far, most employers aren't paying minimum wage. They can't get help at minimum wage. The fact of the matter is that what we did yesterday in the Making Ontario Open for Business Act is absolutely the right way to go to get our economy moving again.

When Bill 148 was brought in, we lost 52,000 jobs in January. In August, we lost over 80,000 jobs, and most of those, for the first time in my 28 years, were part-time jobs. Why? Because of the equal pay provisions in Bill 148. You had to have a part-timer paid the same as the person who has worked for you for 25 years. Businesses can't afford that. They laid people off in droves—over 80,000 people. We can't keep going the way they want us to go.

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Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Take your seats. Order.

Interjection.

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

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's obvious that this government has no understanding that the value of a person's labour is the same, regardless of that person. Whether they're a part-time worker or a full-time worker, it's the value of their labour that should be equal.

I'm certain that when the Deputy Premier needs a day off, she doesn't lose a day's pay. And we know that this government is more than comfortable handing Conservative insiders million-dollar pay packets. But when it comes to average working people, those standards don't apply. They're stuck working for poverty wages and have to choose between taking a sick day and losing a day's pay. Why does the government think that's acceptable?

Hon. Jim Wilson: To the honourable member, I say, what isn't acceptable is 80,000 people losing their jobs in August and 52,000 in January. What part of this don't you get? What part of going in the wrong direction don't you get? Why do you keep propping up the direction the Liberals took this province? They took this province down the sewer, and you're helping to once again—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members take their seats. I would remind all members to make their comments and their questions and their responses through the Chair.

Next question.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Deputy Premier. But I'm going to state in this House what I've stated many times before: I will stand with working people before elections, during elections and after elections.

For people trying to make ends meet, losing paid sick days is actually a big deal. It means losing a day's pay. That can make a huge difference when it comes to paying the bills at the end of the month.

The Deputy Premier doesn't lose a day's pay when she takes a sick day. Why must other workers?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Laurie Scott: Mr. Speaker, yesterday's announcement was a great announcement. It sent to the world the message that Ontario is open for business.

Interjection.

Hon. Laurie Scott: Absolutely.

The greatest benefit we can give to workers is reducing red tape to help create jobs in the province of Ontario so they have better-paying jobs.

We have one of the highest minimum wages in Canada, and we're going to tie those ongoing increases to inflation—not politics, economics. Those increases are going to be tied to inflation.

The best thing that we can do for the workers of the province of Ontario is provide better-paying jobs and decrease the unsightly costs of affordability in the province of Ontario. That's—

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, most working people are just trying to make ends meet, and this feels to them like another cut they just can't afford. One woman working four different minimum wage jobs was on the radio this morning and she said that it felt like getting hit in the gut.

The government seems quite happy taking away people's pay hikes or docking them a day's pay just because they get sick.

Would the Deputy Premier be willing to dock her paycheque when she gets sick—or better yet, to try living on the \$14 minimum wage?

Hon. Laurie Scott: Mr. Speaker, in the recent election, in which we received a large mandate from the people of the province of Ontario—they wanted life to be more affordable. So we're making life more affordable. We're decreasing their cost of living. We're decreasing their hydro. We're decreasing their gas bills. We're decreasing their home heating. We are providing an environment—and many businesses are here today, supporting our action of the open for business act so that they can provide more jobs, and better-paying jobs, to those people, so they can afford to live in the province of Ontario, so they can afford their groceries and so they can afford their electric bills. That's what the people of the province of Ontario said in June: "Make our lives more affordable. Give us better-paying jobs." That's exactly what the PC government is doing on this side of the House.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Yesterday, the minister introduced the Making Ontario Open for Business Act.

For the last 15 years, the previous Liberal government created unnecessary red tape. The hard truth is that the previous Liberal government was fixated on job regulation instead of job creation. During our government's consultations across the province, businesses told us loud and clear that the regulatory burden is getting worse every year. This comes at a time when our largest competitor, the United States, is reducing the cost of doing business in a historic way.

Could the minister please inform this Legislature of how Ontario fell behind under the previous Liberal government?

Hon. Jim Wilson: Thank you to my honourable colleague for the question. Ontario has slid rather badly. We're used to thinking of ourselves as being up there in the same league as New York and California. But in a very disturbing recent report, using 2016 figures—a good measure of your economy is your GDP per capita, so your production per capita, and of the 64 jurisdictions in North America, so that's the 50 states, the district of Columbia, the 13 provinces—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Why do you hate Ontario?

Hon. Jim Wilson: Out of that ranking of 64, New York was third, California was ninth, and we were 46th, Mr. Speaker. We used to be right up there with New York and California; we were 46th. That's how badly the Liberal government brought us down.

They didn't care about jobs. They brought in every regulation and piece of red tape they could. There wasn't a piece of red tape they didn't like. They brought it in and piled it up, piled it up and piled it up. Our job creators are going elsewhere. They're absolutely leaving, and our productivity has gone to the bottom third of all of North America.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you to the minister for his response.

Ontario was once the economic engine of Confederation, but that was before the opposition voted with the Wynne Liberals 97% of the time. When the previous government introduced Bill 148, they drowned Ontario in a tsunami of new regulations that imposed unnecessary costs on businesses. For Ontario job creators, it was too much too soon. I'm proud of our government for the people for taking concrete measures to open Ontario for business and help create and protect good jobs in Ontario.

Could the minister please inform this Legislature of how the Making Ontario Open for Business Act will once again make Ontario a top-tier destination for job creation, investment, entrepreneurship and growth?

Hon. Jim Wilson: Thank you again to my colleague.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned Ontario's GDP per capita statistic, and across the way they're saying, "Why are you putting down Ontario?" We need to be realistic and transparent with the people of Ontario. They have their heads in the sand over there, Mr. Speaker, just like the Liberals had for 15 years. We're sliding badly. Jobs are going, every day, to Ohio, Michigan and to Quebec. Other provinces are doing—we're lagging four other provinces. We used to be, as the honourable member said, the economic engine of Canada.

The Making Ontario Open for Business Act, getting rid of the job-killing parts of Bill 148, opening up our trade sector and changing the ratios, those are all good things for good jobs and better jobs in the province of Ontario. We need to do it and we need to do it now.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

Mr. Chris Glover: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. The communities of

Brampton, Markham and Milton had been eagerly anticipating a new university campus. These campuses were an opportunity for young people to get a world-class education closer to home. They were going to be centres of innovation that would grow the economies of these already fast-growing communities in the GTA.

Years of tireless effort went into making these campuses a reality, but last night this government snatched that away without a word of warning. Is the minister prepared to reconsider this callous and short-sighted decision?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. I will repeat that we promised the people of Ontario to restore accountability and trust in Ontario's finances, and part of that process means making tough decisions about projects across Ontario. Our government is being forced to clean up the irresponsible and reckless financial mess and decisions of the previous Liberal government.

We know, thanks to the independent commission of inquiry, that the depths of the waste and mismanagement of the previous Liberal government have caused this situation. The Liberals have shattered the trust of Ontarians, and our focus is on restoring trust. I remind everyone that it is the NDP who supported the Liberals on 97% of their votes.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Chris Glover: Again to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities: Markham, Milton and Brampton are some of the fastest-growing cities in Canada, but they tend to be taken for granted by the government at Queen's Park. They are the only communities with over a million people in North America that do not have a university. These campuses were investments in a smart future to make these communities centres of the next generation of research and development, and to create 21st-century jobs. Why is the government breaking the promise to make that investment to these communities?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you again for that question. I think we need to understand the financial situation that we are in. We were elected to restore accountability and trust in Ontario's finances. In an election year, the Liberals made empty political promises all across Ontario for programs and projects that they knew we could not afford, hiding the costs from the public, and creating a \$15-billion deficit that Ontario is reeling from today.

They shattered the trust of Ontarians, and our focus is on cleaning up the irresponsible and reckless financial decisions of the previous government. We are working on restoring trust and accountability in Ontario's finances and our future.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Roman Baber: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. Minister, October is Manufacturing Month. It serves as an opportunity for government to come together with industry, labour, chambers of commerce, professional associations

and educational institutions to recognize the vital role this sector plays in the day-to-day lives of Ontarians.

The manufacturing sector employs around 760,000 people in Ontario and makes up about 12% of our province's GDP. It is safe to say that the manufacturing industry is an important driver in our province's prosperity.

Could the minister please tell the Legislature what our government for the people is doing to stand up for manufacturing jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Jim Wilson: Thank you to my honourable colleague for the question. As all members know, manufacturing took quite a hit over the last few years under the previous Liberal government: 320,000 jobs—manufacturing jobs, good-paying jobs—were lost between 2003 and 2009, and since that date we've seen a steady decline; we're still counting how many more thousands of jobs we've lost in the manufacturing sector.

I've had numerous opportunities, along with colleagues, in my capacity as minister, to tour a number of our great manufacturers that are still here in the province: General Motors, Linamar, Ford, Toyota and Honda in my own riding. Yesterday, Ministers Scott, Fullerton and I visited Leland Industries. I want to thank them for their hospitality.

All of these businesses told us that we needed to get rid of the job-killing parts of Bill 148, that they weren't able to hire new people. They couldn't find apprentices. They needed the College of Trades ended. That's what we're doing through the Making Ontario Open for Business Act, and we're very proud to be doing that on this side of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Roman Baber: Thank you to the minister for his response. Back to the minister: Ontario is North America's manufacturing heartland and a world-class producer of automobiles, information technology, communications, biotech, pharmaceuticals, medical devices and many more goods. Ontario alone is the largest subnational automotive assembly jurisdiction in North America.

Yesterday, our government for the people announced a key piece of legislation that is going to support our manufacturing industry and encourage companies to stay right here in Ontario. If passed, this legislation will help businesses create jobs and expand.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the honourable minister: What is the government's message to companies like Leland and the entire automotive industry?

Hon. Jim Wilson: Thank you for the question. Our message to the automotive industry and to all of our job creators in the province, large or small, is that help is on the way. Ontario is open for business, Mr. Speaker.

Not only is our government standing up for the manufacturing industry by reducing burdensome red tape, but our government has scrapped the Liberal cap-and-trade scheme. We've scrapped the Green Energy Act. We've promised to clean up the mess the Liberals left behind on hydro. We're lowering taxes, and we're fighting the worst tax of all, the job-killing Trudeau carbon tax, the federal

carbon tax that will be a death knell for manufacturing in this province and that will undo all the good things we're trying to do through our Making Ontario Open for Business Act. Shame on the federal government. They need to rethink this punishing tax. It's not only punishing families; it's punishing jobs and our job creators. It's absolutely the wrong way to go.

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE FUNDING

Ms. Sara Singh: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Mr. Speaker, in my community of Brampton, parents, students and even senior citizens were eagerly anticipating a new university campus. We were excited for this opportunity because we were finally being recognized as a fast-growing and world-class city that can provide educational opportunity focused on innovation, job creation and cyber security for the next generation.

Years of tireless effort have gone into making this campus a reality. But in a blink of an eye, the work and planning has all been thrown out the window. Speaker, why is this government cancelling investments that are critical to our growth in Brampton?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for that question—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Please take your seats.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: We promised the people of Ontario to restore accountability and trust in Ontario's finances. Part of that process means making tough decisions about projects across Ontario. Our government is being forced to clean up the irresponsible and reckless financial decisions of the previous Liberal government. And we know now, thanks to the independent commission of inquiry, the depths of the waste and mismanagement of the previous Liberal government. To describe the previous government's actions, the Auditor General used words like "conceal," "bogus," "deceptive" and "unreliable."

In an election year, they made empty promises to Ontarians for programs and projects they knew they could not afford, to a billion—

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

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Supplementary.

Ms. Sara Singh: Thank you very much, Minister, for that recording—sorry, I mean "answer."

Brampton is the ninth-largest city in Canada, but it is constantly not getting its fair share. Millions of dollars have already gone into planning this university and our affiliated centre for innovation, not to mention the wasted time and effort from all of those involved in the project.

These campuses were investments in boosting Brampton's economy, creating good-paying jobs and opportunities for our young people closer to home. In fact,

this was something that members on the Brampton side of the government benches actually campaigned on. So why is this government continuing to treat Brampton like a second-class city?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for that question. We've been clear that this government is committed to enhancing financial accountability and transparency. We owe our children a positive future.

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The previous Liberal government, propped up by NDP, who supported the Liberals on 97% of their votes, made empty promises in an election year for programs and projects that they knew they could not afford, leading to a \$15-billion deficit and hiding that from the public. The Liberals shattered the trust of Ontarians, and the NDP propped them up on their votes. Our focus is on restoring trust and accountability in Ontario's finances. That is important for our future.

TAXATION

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My question is for the Deputy Premier. Market economies have shown a remarkable ability to support innovation and adapt to changing circumstances—just think of the shift from horse to car travel a century ago. Market prices guide the decisions that people and businesses make, influencing what items they choose to buy, produce and sell.

Does the Ford government believe in markets and the importance of market-based solutions?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Jim Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, but I sense a bit of a trap here from the honourable member. I'm trying to figure out what you're up to over there, Michael—the honourable member, I should say. Perhaps I'll just wait for the supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Supplementary.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I believe, Mr. Speaker, given the response I heard in questions around Bill 148, that the government does believe in market solutions. So if that's the case, why is the Premier wasting taxpayer dollars to fight a lawsuit against the federal government to bring in a market-based solution to address the climate crisis?

Here's the bottom line: If something is free, people will do more of it. If pollution is free, people will pollute more. It's basic economics, supported by a Nobel Prize-winning economist. Even Conservative policy analysts have shown that putting a price on pollution will reduce pollution and put more money back in the pockets of hard-working people in Ontario, so they can save even more by reducing the amount of pollution. So I ask—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister.

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Hold on. Sorry, the question had been referred to the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Jim Wilson: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member from Guelph: We do know where the member from Guelph stands. The member for Guelph and the Green Party of Ontario are in favour of a \$150-a-tonne carbon tax. Now, even Justin Trudeau, who is willing to put 11 cents on a litre of gas, isn't willing to put 35 cents on a litre of gas. But to give credit, that is where the member and his party are coming from.

We understand the problem of climate change and we understand it needs solutions. We will be addressing those with a plan that balances the economy and the environment. What we won't be doing is putting a 35-cents-a-litre charge on a litre of gasoline, as the Green Party advocates.

TAXATION

Mr. Doug Downey: My question is for the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. Yesterday, the country tuned in while Justin Trudeau announced he was fully prepared to impose a carbon tax on provinces without a carbon pricing system. Trudeau conceded this tax will put a burden on the people of Ontario. He stated that the Liberals will "help Canadians adjust to this new reality." In turn, he promised all residents the Liberals would then return funds back to them to ensure they would not be impacted by the increased costs.

This sounds too good to be true. I've never heard of a tax that puts more money back in people's pockets. Can the minister please tell us the truth about Justin "Houdini" Trudeau's tax?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, through you, I thank the member for Barrie–Springwater–Oro-Medonte for his insightful question. Justin Trudeau's carbon tax is going to have an impact on people who drive cars. Justin Trudeau's carbon tax is going to have an impact on people who have to heat their homes. His carbon tax is going to have an impact and it is going to hurt families. It's going to hurt businesses and make them think twice about employing another employee. The president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business gave warning that the outcome for small business, whether it's textile businesses, pizza businesses or other businesses, is dire. It is not good for job creators.

Mr. Speaker, this is not about a climate plan; this is about a tax. The FAO made it clear last week: \$648 per family by 2022.

I agree with the member: Anyone who hears a politician say, "I'm going to increase your taxes and give you more money," should think twice.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Doug Downey: I thank the minister for his answer. I'm so proud to be part of a government that does not submit and is ready to do what it takes to fight against this imposition of a carbon tax. We've made it crystal clear that

we believe man-made climate change is real and our province is being threatened because of it. We've seen extreme weather cause floods, fires, wind damage and much more. Our government has been clear that our environment is a priority, and we're ready to take action to minimize the effects.

Trudeau claims his carbon tax is a proven method to minimize the symptoms of climate change. The Trudeau carbon tax will start at \$20 per tonne in January, and rise to \$50 per tonne in 2022. Can the minister tell us: Will this really make a difference?

Hon. Rod Phillips: The member raises an excellent point. The Trudeau carbon tax will go to \$50 a tonne—that's the \$648 per family—but as the leader of the Green Party would agree, that's not an effective level for a carbon tax. If it's not \$150 a tonne, causing a 35-cent increase in gas, then economists who think a carbon tax is a good idea would agree. We don't agree, Mr. Speaker.

When Justin Trudeau talks about a polluter, what he's talking about is a commuter. He's talking about mums and dads who have to drive their kids to hockey, who have to drive their kids to school. He's talking about punishing families.

That's why we've been clear: We will fight the Trudeau carbon tax. We will join provinces like Saskatchewan—six provinces now, that disagree with the federal carbon plan—and fight this carbon tax. We will fight it in the courts. We'll use all the resources in our power to stand against this tax that hurts families and hurts Ontario job creators.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Yesterday the government announced their plan to force workers to get a doctor's note to prove that they're sick, but for years doctors with the Ontario Medical Association have been very clear that when you're sick you should be staying home, not dragging yourself in to work to avoid losing a day's pay, and definitely not dragging yourself into a doctor's office to get a note so you don't have to drag yourself in to work.

Our health care system is already stretched, and this will only give doctors more work. What is the justification for this move?

Hon. Laurie Scott: Thank you very much for the question. We realize that doctors are stressed. We realize the medical system is stretched. I want to point out that in the legislation it says a medical note, a "qualified health practitioner" note. So there is, certainly, flexibility, but there also has to be accountability. Not every employer is going to ask an employee for a medical note. This is very much up to the employer. But we found—we've spoken across the province, heard feedback across the province—that there has to be some accountability when asked by an employer. We said, broadly, a medical health practitioner's note.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that answers the question. It seems very reasonable on this side of the House for our businesses.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Mr. Speaker, that response actually leaves us with more questions. And to add on to this mess, the government isn't just taking away paid sick days. Under the proposed changes to the Employment Standards Act, people will now have fewer days off to deal with family tragedies. When a loved one passes away, the last thing anyone wants to worry about is whether they can take time off to attend their funeral.

Amazingly, the change also says an employer can demand proof in situations of bereavement. Is this government seriously proposing that people have to produce a death certificate for their mother before they're allowed to go to her funeral in the province of Ontario?

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Hon. Laurie Scott: Mr. Speaker, it's very disappointing that the opposition is demonizing businesses in the province of Ontario and making it look to be that they don't care about their employees. That is not going on in the province of Ontario.

We have eight job-protected days for employees, similar to other provinces across the country. We have designated—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Laurie Scott: We're protecting every worker in the province of Ontario, Mr. Speaker, with those job-protected days.

I know the members opposite are upset that we brought in a piece of legislation that puts Ontario open for business and gives workers the opportunity to have better employment. Maybe you should look at it that way.

TAXATION

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

We often hear pleas from the opposition in the House. The opposition call for help, to help the people of Ontario. On June 7, the people of this province voted for a change, and our government intends to deliver to Ontarians. Ontarians are tired of dealing with years of mismanagement and a government that wasn't listening. Now they have a government that cares.

Can the Minister of the Environment tell members of this Legislature how we intend to ensure that the people of Etobicoke–Lakeshore and this province know that this government will continue to fight for them?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore: Yesterday, we did hear about Justin Trudeau's plan—a plan that others have talked about. It will impose a \$50-a-tonne, \$648-a-year charge on Ontario families by 2022. At the same time, like the leader of the Green Party, members of the opposition,

members of the NDP have talked about a \$150-a-tonne charge. That charge is 35 cents a litre on gasoline. For the 73% of Ontarians who heat their homes with natural gas, that's \$263 a month more in natural gas charges. Ontario families just cannot afford that.

That's why, as we promised during the campaign, we will be standing up to the federal government, joining Saskatchewan and the other provinces against the carbon plan, who will be facing the federal government in court against this unconstitutional, regressive, job-killing carbon tax.

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Supplementary.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I appreciate knowing we have such a passionate minister heading the fight alongside our Premier. Ontario voted for a government that would put their needs and their concerns first. Our government is holding true to our promise and making sure that the people of Ontario are first in our thoughts in all decisions we make.

Ontarians are far too smart to believe that Trudeau's rebates are anything more than a temporary vote-buying strategy that will be discarded once the election is over. I am confident that our efforts we put in place will rid this province of a cap-and-trade carbon tax and ensure the Trudeau carbon tax is never imposed.

Following the removal of the cap-and-trade tax, can the minister please update the House on our plan to protect the environment for future generations in Etobicoke–Lakeshore and the rest of the province?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore: I share her confidence that Ontarians will see through the sham of a government that's going to tax you more and put more money in your pockets.

She is also correct that we have to do our bit. Ontario has been a leader on the environmental front and will continue to be so. That's why we will bring forward a plan that balances the economy and the environment, a made-in-Ontario solution that understands the importance of Ontario's job creators but also the importance of the environment and makes sure the environment is protected.

We are in the middle of an extensive consultation process now. For those who want to share their thoughts, I'd encourage them to do so at www.ontario.ca/climatechange, where we're gathering thousands of inputs. I look forward to presenting a plan that families can count on to protect the environment but also not attack their ability to live the lives they want, put more money back in their pockets—a plan that supports Ontario families and the environment.

LABOUR UNIONS

Mr. Jamie West: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Now more than ever, workers in the province want to join a union, so it's not surprising the government is going to make that more difficult. Tens of thousands of workers won the right to a simple card-check system, and

that was in place for decades in the province before the previous Conservative government took the right away. Card certification for workers in the building service sector, the temp agency sector and the home care sector became a reality just last year. New Democrats argued that it should extend to every sector. If a majority of workers sign a union card, you should have a union.

Is making it harder to join a union what this labour minister represents?

Hon. Laurie Scott: Yes, we did take back the card-based certification for the three sectors that were put into Bill 148. We restored it with the secret ballot, which is a pretty good sign for democracy. I hope the member opposite isn't against democracy. Workers will still have a choice. A secret ballot is a good democratic choice, and we hope the member supports us on that.

Interjections.

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

Supplementary?

Mr. Jamie West: Back to the minister of employers—the Minister of Labour: People join unions because they want to be treated fairly and they want to work safely. This government is dragging the province backwards—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government side has to come to order. He's right there and I can't hear him.

I apologize to the member for Sudbury. Put your question.

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you, Speaker. I was yelling as loud as I could to be heard. I apologize for their behaviour.

People join unions because they want to be treated fairly and work—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Mr. Jamie West: —safely. Now, dragging this province backward, limited rights to first-contract arbitration recently won by labour will be repealed. First-contract arbitration is often the only way to avoid disruption once a workplace is unionized.

What does the Minister of Labour have to say to the millions of unionized workers in need of protections now more than ever since the government is about to roll back their rights in a race to the bottom?

Hon. Laurie Scott: Yesterday's announcement was a good-news announcement for workers and employers. Our government will remove the worst burdens on Ontario businesses, while we're still preserving real benefits for Ontario workers. They still have rights. We're not taking those rights away, Mr. Speaker.

Businesses have the confidence to succeed and they're going to expand, and we're going to have better-paying jobs in the province of Ontario, and safe places to work. This was a good-news announcement yesterday for employers and employees, and the NDP should embrace those announcements.

1130

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Billy Pang: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Many employees and job seekers are concerned about the burden of unnecessary and duplicative red tape and an unaddressed skills gap, particularly in the skilled trades. This is why I'm pleased to hear that the government is moving forward with modernizing the Ontario College of Trades. Businesses and tradespeople have expressed to me face to face their frustration with the college and the fact that the previous Liberal government—they are not here—failed to address the skills gap.

Speaker, through you, can the minister tell us how modernizing the Ontario College of Trades will deliver on our government's promise to create good jobs and make Ontario open for business again?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for the question and strong advocacy for the people of Markham–Unionville.

We've heard loud and clear from employers and tradespeople that the Ontario College of Trades is not delivering as it's currently structured. Take the example of Alberta: Despite being a third of the size of Ontario, Alberta has 50,000 apprentices while Ontario has only 70,000. Meanwhile, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has said there are 154,000 unfilled private sector jobs in Ontario. We need a system that gets Ontario's economy moving and fills the skills gap.

We know people are prepared to work and they deserve a shot at a job. We promised the people of Ontario to create good jobs in Ontario—

Interjections.

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

I'm going to remind the member for Markham–Unionville, and all members, that it's inappropriate to make reference to the absence of any member at any time.

Mr. Billy Pang: I withdraw.

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

Mr. Billy Pang: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Minister, for your hard work in making Ontario open for business and modernizing the Ontario College of Trades. I'm proud that, unlike the previous Liberal government, we are focused on creating better jobs and filling the skills gap.

Under the previous Liberal government, which was propped up by the NDP, Ontario lost 300,000 good manufacturing jobs. The previous Liberal government hid the true size of Ontario's deficit, leaving our province with the most debt of any subnational government in the world and a \$15-billion deficit.

Speaker, through you, can the minister tell us more about how our government legislation, if passed, will increase access to trades and reduce red tape on businesses and job seekers?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Our legislation, if passed, will wind down the Ontario College of Trades and work to find efficiencies to reduce red tape and duplication that exist in the current system. The current system is not working for the economy, employers and tradespeople.

We've heard from the tradespeople and employers that many of the roles and responsibilities are overly burdensome. For example, apprentices must be registered in two separate systems, one with the ministry and one with the college.

We know people are prepared to do the work and they deserve a shot at a job. We were elected on a promise to reduce red tape and create good jobs in Ontario. Promise made, promise kept.

HOME CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The crisis in Ontario's health care has been growing after decades of Conservative and Liberal mismanagement. The quality of care has declined and wait-lists are getting bigger every day while people's health suffers waiting for the care they need.

Across Ontario, home care has been hit the hardest. Patients and workers are both feeling the squeeze. Home care PSWs are doing the very best they can, but many have low wages, do not have protections and their work schedule is unpredictable. Families are asking: What is this government doing to address the needs of their loved ones who are waiting for home care?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. I do agree with her that there has been a crisis that has developed in terms of resorting to hallway health care as a result of 15 years of inaction by the previous Liberal government.

We got elected to change that. We got elected to end hallway health care, and we've started action on that right now. We made an announcement several weeks ago about injecting an additional \$90 million into the system to create 1,100 new spaces to get us through flu season while we are developing a long-term-capacity plan. We are working on that right away.

We also know that some of the reasons for wait times are because people are in hospitals and they don't have anywhere to go. We know that we need to build more long-term-care beds. We've already announced that 6,000 of them are in production. But we know that home care is an increasingly important aspect of care because most people want to go home when they are able to leave hospital. Home care provides those supports with the nurses and the PSWs and the supports that people need. We are going to continue to build on that to make sure that people get the care they need.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, the situation in home care needs to be fixed, and this government is not

helping by taking things from bad to worse. Cuts and de-regulating will not provide Ontarians with the quality care they deserve.

Seniors in my riding of London–Fanshawe are suffering while this government hesitates to provide the home care services that the people who are the most vulnerable are waiting for. When will this government take the crisis in health care seriously and commit to providing the care that all Ontarians deserve and are expecting from this government?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I think it's important for all members in this Legislature, as well as anyone who is watching these activities, to note that what we are doing is increasing health care in Ontario. We have indicated that through the investments that we've already made in hospitals and the investments that are happening across the board, the \$3.8 billion that is going to be spent both federally and provincially to create a comprehensive and coordinated mental health and addictions system. Because right now what we have is bits and pieces all over that don't connect with each other.

I think it is really important to note that we want to augment our health care services. We know we have a rapidly aging population. We have new medications that are coming on board to combat rare diseases, which is wonderful. We are going to make sure that we have those resources for people when they need them. That is our priority. Patient safety and patient concerns are top priorities for us on this side, and it's something that I work on every day in the ministry.

SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS

Mr. David Piccini: Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Education: Each day on my way into work I stop and usually see at least one school bus stopping to pick up young students in my riding. On occasion, I've been stopped behind these school buses as I see a lineup of students eagerly waiting to get on the bus to head into school to learn. They're always greeted by a smile and parents are often there waving goodbye.

Mr. Speaker, today is School Bus Driver Appreciation Day, part of school bus safety awareness week. On this day, I can't help but remember the many bus drivers who shaped my life growing up. I think of Keith and Wendy. These men and women end up leaving a lasting impression on young students' lives.

Can the Minister of Education please tell me about how the government of Ontario plans to support these men and women who are crucial parts of our education system?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I would like to thank the great member from Northumberland–Peterborough South. He's doing a great job on behalf of that riding.

I stand here today in front of you, Speaker, to share our sincere appreciation. On behalf of the Ontario PC government and Premier Doug Ford, I would like to thank school bus drivers across this province, because we all know the important job that they take on twice a day on behalf of all

of us as they make sure that their students get to school and back in a very safe manner.

It's interesting; every day, school bus drivers' focus is ensuring that nearly 800,000 students from across Ontario are getting to school every day, as I said, two times a day. Their role is particularly critical in rural and northern Ontario.

1140

I'd like to share with you, Speaker, that we recognize how important their job is. In fact, I'm pleased to say that by the end of this month, eligible school bus drivers will be receiving funding from the School Bus Driver Retention Program. That's a thank you and it's recognition for the important role they have every day.

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Supplementary.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you to the minister for that excellent answer. I know that parents and families across my riding appreciate the hard-working men and women school bus drivers that get their children to school on a day-to-day basis.

Can the Minister of Transportation update this House on how many students rely on these services and what is being done to make sure that our most precious assets are able to complete their journey each day from home to the classroom and back?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. John Yakabuski: Thank you to my colleague for the question. As with every file my ministry works on, safety is paramount, especially when it comes to our children. Our school bus drivers across the province do an excellent job of ensuring the safety of our students. Approximately 800,000 students in Ontario are transported back and forth to school every day, and our bus drivers travel 1.8 million kilometres each and every school day. I'm pleased to inform the House that school buses continue to be one of the safest ways for our children to get to and from school. Students are about 70 times more likely to get to school safely by travelling on a school bus than by travelling in a car.

On School Bus Driver Appreciation Day, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our school bus drivers and to remind all drivers in Ontario of the importance of paying attention, leaving space and being alert whenever they are approaching or passing a school bus.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Faisal Hassan: My question is to the Minister of Finance. This government recently allowed the Financial Services Commission of Ontario to increase auto insurance rates by as much as 11.6%. This is unacceptable and will hurt families in my community of York South-Weston who are already being gouged in their auto insurance rates just because of where they live.

Why doesn't this government stand up to the insurance companies, stop the rate increases and finally end postal code discrimination in auto insurance?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I want to thank the member for that question. Once again, it gives me a great opportunity to stand here and congratulate the MPP from Milton for his very, very hard work on this file.

Our member from Milton has proposed an initiative that is a great way to combat discrimination in our auto system. Now that the member's legislation is tabled, we truly look forward to working with him and industry stakeholders to ensure our auto insurance system meets the needs of Ontario's 10 million drivers. The member from Milton has done the right thing the right way. He consulted with stakeholders right across the province and will help with bringing relief to families across all areas of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Again, through you, Speaker, I'll ask the Minister of Finance. Drivers in my community are being gouged by insurance companies, and it is about time that this government takes action. This is the fourth quarter in a row that the government has allowed auto insurance rates to increase.

Interjection: Shame.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Shame. One step this government could take to bring fairness back to auto insurance rates is to end postal code discrimination in premiums that penalize good drivers just because of where they live. Will this government—again, I'll ask directly to the Minister of Finance—finally stand up to insurance companies and support the NDP's bill that would end postal code discrimination in auto insurance rates?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I think the member from York South-Weston should realize—I realize you are new here, but you should know the history is that the insurance proposal from the Liberals was part of a deal made with the NDP. So this is exactly why we are where we are. It was a "stretch goal," in her own words, that the former Premier made. So we'll certainly not be taking any insurance lessons from the NDP.

In the meantime, our Premier, Doug Ford, has made it very, very clear that our government is committed to ensuring fairness in rate setting, ending discriminatory practices and working towards a system that puts the driver first—unlike the NDP member from Brampton East. He wants rates to go up right across the rest of Ontario. We'll have none of that.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member from London-Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I would like to introduce some guests to the Legislature: from Home Care Ontario, Sue VanderBent, the CEO of the organization; as well, this afternoon, I'll be meeting with Sally Harding, Nightingale Nursing; Stephanie Hayes from 1to1 Rehab; and Bruce Mahoney from Home Instead Senior Care. Welcome to the

Legislature, and I look forward to meeting with you later this afternoon.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: I just wanted to take a moment to introduce my long-suffering wife, Joni, and my oldest daughter, Lena, sitting up in the public gallery on the east side.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I just wanted to introduce Rob Murphy, John Chapman, Chuck Sandrelli and Brian Crowe, who are from the independent school bus drivers of Ontario association.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Brampton Centre.

Ms. Sara Singh: I'd like to introduce my good friend Dasvinder Singh Kamboj, who is joining us here today. He'll actually be leaving this weekend for Alberta.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for London–Fanshawe has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care concerning home care. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a deferred vote on government notice of motion number 13 relating to the allocation of time on Bill 34, An Act to repeal the Green Energy Act, 2009 and to amend the Electricity Act, 1998, the Environmental Protection Act, the Planning Act and various other statutes.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1148 to 1153.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): On October 23, 2018, Mr. Smith, Bay of Quinte, moved government notice of motion number 13, relating to allocation of time on Bill 34. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Hogarth, Christine	Piccini, David
Baber, Roman	Jones, Sylvia	Rasheed, Kaleed
Babikian, Aris	Kanapathi, Logan	Roberts, Jeremy
Bailey, Robert	Karahalios, Belinda	Romano, Ross
Barrett, Toby	Ke, Vincent	Sabawy, Sheref
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Khanjin, Andrea	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bouma, Will	Kramp, Daryl	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Calandra, Paul	Kusendova, Natalia	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Stan	Lecce, Stephen	Simard, Amanda
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Skelly, Donna
Coe, Lorne	Martin, Robin	Smith, Dave

Crawford, Stephen	Martow, Gila	Smith, Todd
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McDonell, Jim	Surma, Kinga
Downey, Doug	McNaughton, Monte	Tangri, Nina
Dunlop, Jill	Miller, Norman	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Elliott, Christine	Mitas, Christina Maria	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	Mulroney, Caroline	Tibollo, Michael A.
Fee, Amy	Nicholls, Rick	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fullerton, Merrilee	Oosterhoff, Sam	Wai, Daisy
Ghamari, Goldie	Pang, Billy	Walker, Bill
Gill, Parm	Park, Lindsey	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Parsa, Michael	Yakabuski, John
Harris, Mike	Pettapiece, Randy	Yurek, Jeff
Hillier, Randy	Phillips, Rod	

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

Nays

Andrew, Jill	Gélinas, France	Monteith-Farrell, Judith
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Glover, Chris	Morrison, Suze
Arthur, Ian	Gretzky, Lisa	Natyshak, Taras
Begum, Doly	Harden, Joel	Rakocevic, Tom
Bell, Jessica	Hassan, Faisal	Schreiner, Mike
Berns-McGown, Rima	Hatfield, Percy	Shaw, Sandy
Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bourgouin, Guy	Hunter, Mitzie	Tabuns, Peter
Coteau, Michael	Karpoche, Bhutila	Taylor, Monique
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	Kernaghan, Terence	Vanthof, John
Fife, Catherine	Lalonde, Marie-France	West, Jamie
Fraser, John	Lindo, Laura Mae	
Gates, Wayne	Mamakwa, Sol	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 71; the nays are 37.

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

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): This House stands in recess until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1156 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jamie West: I'd like to introduce Eric Delparte. Eric was the one who originally nominated me to be a candidate for the NDP. He's also the chief steward of mines from Steelworkers USW Local 6500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TOM KILPATRICK

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I wish to pay tribute today to Tom Kilpatrick. Tom just retired after 40 years as a public school board trustee in Windsor—40 years, Speaker. He was just 35 years old when he was first elected. That was back in 1978. The Prime Minister was Pierre Elliott Trudeau, the Premier was Bill Davis and Windsor's mayor was Bert Weeks.

Those were the days, Speaker, when school board trustees had the power to levy taxes. They had total control over the budgets and programs. They did all the hiring. They did their own bargaining with their employee groups. Yes, much has changed in education over the past 40 years.

Tom Kilpatrick served several terms as chair of the public board over those many years. His was a voice of reason, a quiet man of influence whose educated opinion was highly valued. Tom spent most of his working life at St. Clair College as the coordinator of the economics and management department.

He chose not to seek re-election this time, although he would have won easily had he decided to stay on. After 40 years as a trustee they give you a gold pin with a diamond star, but Tom Kilpatrick gave his public school system much more than that—thousands of volunteer hours. He was a role model and mentor to newer trustees, and someone administration could always go to for ideas and solutions.

Speaker, Tom Kilpatrick was one in a million. The Greater Essex County District School Board will miss his leadership. I wish him well and a long and healthy retirement.

AQUACULTURE

Mr. Bill Walker: Most of the members are familiar with Ontario agriculture, but how many have heard of Ontario aquaculture? What if I told you that over 100 million meals of farmed Ontario seafood were served this year across Ontario and in the United States? That's 100 million meals of Ontario-farmed rainbow trout, Ontario shrimp, Ontario tilapia and Ontario lake whitefish that have been grown by farmers here in our great province.

Today, I'm excited to welcome several fish farmers to Queen's Park, including R.J. Taylor, who is my constituent and the owner, along with his sister, Arlen, of Cedar Crest Trout Farm, one of the largest commercial trout hatcheries around. Their parents, Jim and Lynette, were pioneers in the industry and next year will celebrate their 50th anniversary raising farmed fish.

They're here today to talk about the sector's incredible growth potential, and I'd be remiss if I did not thank the Ministers of the Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture for making themselves available to discuss new job creation opportunities in this fast-growing sector. Last year in Ontario waters, farmers grew 15 million pounds of seafood and created more than 550 well-paying jobs, often in rural communities.

Speaker and members, with a small amount of red tape reduction and some regulatory changes to recognize the current realities of the industry, this sector could soar. And it could soar in a way that protects our precious water resources in Ontario. It could grow more fish and shrimp than ever before. It could bring jobs and industry to our province while increasing our export potential.

Why is this important to me? Well, if you've collected my trading cards yet—I can't use them as a prop, Mr. Speaker—you already know the answer. The majority of

farmed rainbow trout is born in my home riding, with seven commercial hatcheries that supply most of the young trout that grow in the sustainable net-pen farms in Georgian Bay and specifically in the backyard of my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin, MPP Mantha.

I want to welcome our guests again here today and not steal Mr. Yurek's friend from St. Thomas.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Over the last week I've heard from numerous organizations in my riding of London North Centre that condemn this government's decision to scrap the expert panel on violence against women.

We know that misogyny is one of the leading causes of violence in this province, and yet this government continues to roll back support for abused women. Aside from cancelling the round table, the government has refused to honour funding increases for Ontario's sexual assault centres. It has removed a health and phys ed curriculum that focuses on online safety, respect and consent. Now we learn that the government's attack on Bill 148 threatens to axe a working woman's right to receive paid leave if she is the victim of domestic or sexual violence.

Just this last week, I was proud to attend the media launch of the ninth annual Shine the Light campaign in London North Centre. The campaign, organized by Megan Walker, the executive director of London Abused Women's Centre, aims to educate Londoners about men's violence against women. For years, Megan has been a powerful, respected and outspoken advocate for women's rights. She is a force of nature.

During the month of November, London will turn purple to stand in solidarity with abused women. This year's campaign will shine a light on women who have died from male violence, as well as survivors of revenge porn. Sharing intimate photos or videos without consent is sexual violence, and this message is critically important in fostering a culture of consent online.

I applaud the work of the Shine the Light campaign and stand in solidarity with their efforts to end violence against women.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE WEEK

Ms. Lindsey Park: I rise to recognize the third annual Access to Justice Week. As parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General, I'm honoured to stand in this Legislature to help bring attention to this important issue.

What is access to justice? As a starting point, it refers to the formal rights recognized by our Constitution: to be informed of charges against you in criminal and penal matters in a timely way, to be tried in a reasonable time, and to receive a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial decision-maker.

However, many would agree that real access to justice, real justice for the people, is beyond just the courtroom, and there is much important work to be done. I want to applaud the Law Society of Ontario and their partners for spurring a constructive dialogue on this pressing issue

through the Action Group on Access to Justice and the sessions going on this week. Many people in Ontario still have difficulty accessing affordable legal services when they need them most. They also face seemingly endless court appearances and wait times to bring a conclusion to a legal dispute.

The first step in moving forward is understanding the issues we're currently faced with and then creating solutions to address them. Access to Justice Week is a valuable, innovative effort to do just that.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I rise today to share with you the story of a mother named Colleen from my community.

Colleen's son Daryl passed away in March 2015 after a long struggle with mental illness. Throughout his life, Daryl was placed in six different long-term-care facilities and admitted to the hospital 56 times for mental health episodes.

Colleen's struggle did not end there, as she was diagnosed with PTSD as a result of her son's constant battle with mental illness. While Colleen understands that hospitals are often overworked and underfunded, watching her son be discharged time and time again from the Niagara Health System did nothing to ease her pain. Unfortunately, Daryl fell through the cracks.

Colleen's story is one of countless others I heard this past Saturday at a community forum for mental health in Niagara.

1510

Mental health services are currently handled by at least 10 different ministries and hundreds upon hundreds of different service organizations. Mr. Speaker, it is time for this government to create a dedicated ministry for health and addictions so that no one has to watch a family member fall through the cracks ever again.

People are crying out for help. Families and friends who have lost loved ones are crying out for help. I sincerely hope that the minister will sit down with myself and local health experts to find a comprehensive solution to the mental health crisis that is going on right now in St. Catharines.

BELLS OF PEACE

Mr. Doug Downey: As a government, it's not only our role to fix policies and create legislation. I believe it's also our role to give pause and to remember why and how we get to be here, to give thanks for the opportunity all of us have that allows us to live here in this province during this time of peace.

Almost 620,000 Canadians enlisted during World War I; 61,000 never came home, and another 172,000 were wounded. I'm grateful to be able to share with this House that November 11, 2018, will be the 100th anniversary of the signing of the armistice that officially ended World War I. A hundred years ago, bells rang out everywhere, an auditory symbol of peace.

But, members, the Royal Canadian Legion and Veterans Affairs Canada need your help. They need your help carrying the torch of remembrance to a special event, the Bells of Peace initiative. While this is a member's statement, it comes with an ask: I request that all members of this House promote the Bells of Peace initiative in your respective ridings and on your websites and social media. Legion branches and other groups across the province are in need of assistance. They need help ringing the bells of peace at the remembrance event and making it a success. In honour of all those families who received the call of duty those many years ago, I ask all members of this House to reach out themselves to Legions, faith communities and other groups, and do what they can to celebrate the Bells of Peace.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I rise today to raise two education issues that are important to my constituents of Parkdale-High Park. We all know our schools are crumbling, and the disrepair backlog stands at \$16 billion. So what is this government doing about it? Nothing.

Let me tell you what doing nothing looks like on the ground for our kids.

Last week, students at an elementary school in my riding, St. Vincent de Paul, had to go three days without heat because the boiler broke down. Parents had to bring heaters into the classrooms, because the kids were freezing and were bundled in coats and scarves. Not everyone got a heater, because it was going to overburden the electrical circuits of the school. And this is in October. What's going to happen when the boiler breaks down again in the dead of winter?

Also, I received a letter from The Student School in my riding, which was also sent to Premier Ford and the Minister of Education, condemning the cancellation of the 2015 sex ed curriculum and the creation of the snitch line. They ask this government to put the interests and safety of students first. I hope that the minister includes this as part of her consultation that she's conducting right now.

Speaker, when it comes to education, it is clear that this Conservative government is putting the needs of students last, and that is wrong.

CHINESE-CANADIAN RELATIONS

Mr. Billy Pang: Last weekend in my riding, I had the privilege of attending a first showing of a documentary entitled *My Hometown Across the Ocean*. The documentary highlights the historical relationship between Canada and China. During the early 1900s, Canadians travelled to the Sichuan province of China and helped the local communities through providing health care to community members, along with training in medical practices, and also engaged in building schools. Many Canadians grew up in this province of China, and some of them were even present at that event, with whom I had the pleasure of meeting and exchanging remarks regarding their experience.

Mr. Speaker, this opportunity to learn about Canadian involvement in China reminded me of the importance of positive collaboration between nations and how, through helping each other, we make each other stronger.

I'm honoured and proud to be part of a nation like Canada, which has engaged in commendable diplomatic engagements with other countries and served as a modern-day example of a peacekeeping nation.

EUROWERX

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Eurowerx Precision is a small, innovative Mississauga homegrown business, owned and operated by Dan Pavlovic. A few years ago, seeing a sharp increase in his water bill, Dan designed a device that would cut his water costs significantly. He designed and manufactured his product right here in Ontario.

But Dan faced a lot of red tape in almost every aspect of his business. His dedication and commitment to his product, as well as his dream, kept him going. He found challenges in sourcing skilled labour in Ontario, in patenting his product in a timely fashion, and a number of other issues. Consequently, he moved a large portion of his business to the United States.

Canada is known as the place where new and innovative ideas like Dan's are produced. But we cannot nurture those ideas, and companies like Eurowerx go abroad. Dan is one of many cases where innovative new technology and research is produced in Ontario, but to be successful, they need to go elsewhere.

We, the government for the people, are working hard to make sure people like Dan can be successful in Ontario.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Randy Hillier: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr1, An Act to revive Crystal-Kirkland Mines, Limited.

Bill Pr2, An Act to revive 2063434 Ontario Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to be here today.

October is Child Abuse Prevention Month in Ontario. I firmly believe that we must take this opportunity to shed

light on the abuse of Ontario's most vulnerable children and youth. Every child should feel safe, loved and protected.

As the minister responsible for children and youth, I'm proud to have been asked to take this role on by Premier Ford. There's no greater honour than to advocate on behalf of the young people and families in this province.

We are wearing purple today, and purple ribbons, as a reminder that everybody in our community and in our province plays a role in supporting children and that the protection of those children from child abuse is vital.

We know that we cannot and should not do this work alone. It is for this reason that I stand here today: to reach out to all of you, as members of this assembly, and to Ontarians, professionals who work with children, neighbours, family, friends and colleagues. Child abuse is one of the most sinister things that can happen in our province, or anywhere in Canada, for that matter.

My ministry is the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services with responsibility for women's issues, poverty reduction and citizenship and immigration. I'm often joked about by my cabinet colleagues as the minister of many things. But the reality is that sometimes in my ministry all we see are tears—really tragic things happening to Ontario's most vulnerable people. We're on the front lines of that, just as we are the heart of the people's government.

I remind my staff that when someone calls our office or emails us, we're often their last resort.

1520

One of the things I've seen over the course of the last four months since being the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services is that child abuse takes many forms. I've visited women's shelters, where I've seen lives torn apart from violence against women. It should come as no surprise that women who are fleeing domestic violence often have children they take with them who end up having severe mental health challenges.

One of the dirty little secrets in the province and in this country is something called sex trafficking. Most people being sex-trafficked in the province of Ontario are girls under the age of 18. That's child abuse.

When I talk to all facets of society—our law enforcement, our religious communities, our private and not-for-profit sectors—I see the difference that they make in building a strong social safety net in our communities to protect children against abuse, to fight sex trafficking of young girls, to uphold the duty to report these heinous acts.

I grew up in a small town called New Glasgow, Nova Scotia. I learned at a young age that government cannot and should not do it alone. We in this House need to be supportive of initiatives like Child Abuse Prevention Month, but what is more important is that those voices outside of this assembly join together. These voices must speak as one in defence of Ontario's vulnerable and abused children and youth.

So when a packed room of 600 people in Cornwall, like the one I stood in front of last week in support of the

Children's Treatment Centre with the member from Stornont-Dundas-South Glengarry, stands up and collectively says no to child abuse, then we need 13 million other people in this province to follow their lead. We need the other 13 million people in this province to stand up with them and help us all eradicate abuse of children and youth in Ontario.

It's also important that we do this beyond Child Abuse Prevention Month, because we all hear the stories. We may even know someone over the course of our life who has been affected. It's how we take action that matters. For us to prevent child abuse, sure, it's going to take money, as everything does; but more important than money, it takes time. It takes all of us to speak up and out against child abuse. That's why I ask Ontarians, if you see something, report it.

These are the facts. Abuse can be physical, emotional or sexual. Signs of physical abuse can include bruising or cuts that are unexplained or suspicious. Examples of abusive behaviour include punching, slapping, beating, shaking, burning, biting or throwing a child. Using belts, sticks or other objects to punish a child can cause serious harm. It is abuse.

I received a report from the coroner of Ontario last month. We lost 12 young people in this province in the care of the province between 2014 and 2017. Most of those children who died in the province's care died by suicide, and those girls who died by suicide were either sex-trafficked or they were sexually abused in their own home.

We need to be the eyes and ears of those children. That's our job and our responsibility as adults. That's not government, that's not police, that's not church, and that's not business. That's all of us together, collectively, as a community.

The best way to protect children is to make that call. It's also the law. You can find contact information for your local children's aid society by calling 411 where applicable. Children's aid societies are available to receive your call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. You can also visit my ministry website at Ontario.ca/stopchildabuse for more information.

If we're to build a compassionate society—which I believe we all want—it can't just be a government responsibility. That must come from the people. If I have one ask, it's to take this message with you.

This is an uncomfortable topic, but we need to have that conversation, we need to break down barriers and we need to speak together. Because the only way we are going to be able to do this is with strong, supportive and unified voices that go from one end of Ontario to the other, and I'm confident that the people of this province are up to that task.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Statements by the ministry. Minister of Transportation?

Hon. John Yakabuski: I'm just getting in my seat.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I thought you had something to tell us. My apologies.

Responses.

Miss Monique Taylor: It is my pleasure to speak today on behalf of the NDP caucus and our leader, Andrea

Horwath, as we recognize Child Abuse Prevention Month. Today, October 24, is Dress Purple Day in Ontario. If you go to the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies website, you will see a statement that starts with the following paragraph:

"Every October children's aid societies across the province raise awareness about the rights of children and youth to safety and well-being, and the responsibility of adults and community services to help children, youth, and families who need support. On Ontario Dress Purple Day we join together with our key partners, boards of education, schools, and child care centres and homes, to share this positive message that help is available and to celebrate the community that cares for kids and families."

While it is important to impress on everyone the responsibilities that we all share, the fact is that the responsibility to support them when they need help rests most heavily on us here in this chamber. Governments often talk about "investing in our future," but too often, we fail to invest in our most precious resource: the children and youth who will inherit the responsibilities that we now hold to make this world a better place.

We have as our guide the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, which spells out the importance of family connections and keeping those families together. The front-line workers try hard and often succeed in doing that, but the reality is that they are not given the resources to do that for every family.

Our child welfare system is strained to its limits, and vulnerable children and youth are the ones who pay the price. Last year, protection was extended so that 16- and 17-year-olds who needed help could get it. That was a move that I believe all parties in this House supported. But that comes with a cost—additional costs that were never reflected in the allocations that agencies receive.

The same is true for the Child Protection Information Network. CPIN is a valuable tool to help us make sure that vulnerable children and youth do not fall through the cracks. But the cost to the agencies of implementation impacts the ability to fulfill front-line services. It's all good and well to improve legislation, to improve expectations that we have in caring for our children and youth, but when we demand an already strained system to do more without giving additional resources and support, we are simply trying to shift the blame for our failures.

Too often, children and youth and their families are let down, and that is particularly true among Indigenous families, as well as those in the Black Canadian community, who continue to be vastly overrepresented in our child welfare system. When efforts to keep families together fail or are not possible, children are taken into care, and the parental responsibilities fall to the province. We are far from model parents.

A couple of weeks ago, we were visited here at Queen's Park by the Child Welfare Political Action Committee. They're a group of former children and youth in care, people with lived experience. They reminded us that we fail terribly in preparing those in care for fulfilling a good life. They are much more likely to drop out of high school,

they are much more likely to become homeless and they have much poorer health outcomes.

1530

Last month, the Expert Panel on the Deaths of Children and Youth in Residential Placements reported on their findings when looking into the tragic deaths of 12 youth in care, eight of whom were Indigenous. In their report, the panel said this: “As a society, we owe a duty of care to these young people; a duty of care that we suggest cannot be met by the system in its current state, despite the existence of well-intentioned workers and caregivers and the desire of many to do good work.”

Speaker, as we recognize Child Abuse Prevention Month, we must commit, this government must commit, to provide supports that families need to thrive. And for children and youth in care, we must remember our responsibility to them and ensure that they have the resources they need to get the start in life that we would want for our own children.

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

Mr. John Fraser: On a point of order: I'd like to ask to be able to share my time with the member from Guelph.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa South is seeking unanimous consent of the House to share his time with the member for Guelph. Agreed? Agreed. The member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues, for allowing us to do that.

On behalf of the Ontario Liberal caucus, I'm proud to stand up today and recognize Child Abuse Prevention Month. We're all wearing purple today. I think that's an important day for us, to recognize that one of our greatest duties as legislators is protecting the public. And protecting vulnerable children is certainly not just the responsibility of us as legislators, but of all of us in the community, as the minister said—of everyone—to report suspected child abuse. As legislators, one of our most important jobs is listening to those voices that are really, really hard to hear. The voices of vulnerable children are really hard to hear.

The member from Hamilton did mention the child welfare protection folks who were here about two weeks ago talking to us about the work we need to do to ensure that children in care succeed in life: that we ensure that even when they're supported for post-secondary education, we know they're getting through; that we're doing the work we need to do to make sure that those children who are vulnerable, who are in our care—our duty is to be their parent, to make sure they succeed, to make sure that they get there.

My father worked for the Family Court for many, many years, so although I don't know any names of people, I know the stories of the kinds of challenges that families had, that children went through. It really is important for all of us to try to keep this always in our minds. It's so easy to lose track of it. These are children, young people, who easily fall between the cracks, who easily are out of our sight, whose lives are damaged forever. So I'm very proud

and happy today that we're recognizing that and we're all speaking about it, but it's a 365-day-a-year thing for all of us to work diligently to be able to hear those voices of very vulnerable people every day.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I want to thank the member from Ottawa South for sharing a bit of the independent members' time with me today. I'm honoured to stand up, on behalf of the Green Party, wearing purple today and recognizing that October is Child Abuse Prevention Month.

As the member from Hamilton Mountain said, we do have a duty of care to children who are part of our child and youth welfare system—and that responsibility is so important for us to make the proper investments in our child and welfare systems, to ensure that we honour that duty of care that we have.

I want to just appreciate and say thank you to the minister for recognizing the role that human trafficking plays as part of child abuse.

I just want to say that I've been working with an organization called Free-Them, an organization that's dedicated to stopping the trafficking of young women. They've asked me to read a petition into the Legislature, which I have been on a regular basis, asking for the updated sex ed curriculum because it provides young women, and young people in general, with knowledge around issues of consent and sexual exploitation and making sure that our education system provides young people, particularly young women, with the tools and the education they need to navigate the realities of the 21st century, so we can fight back against exploitation of children through things like sex trafficking.

I'm hoping, given the minister's comments, that we can move forward with a modernized sex education curriculum that provides young women with the tools and information they need to be safe.

I know that not everyone who is in the child welfare system is there because of poverty, but I think it's important to acknowledge the role that poverty does play and how important it is to reform our social assistance system to provide families with economic supports through things like a basic income to take care of their children and their families.

I hope we'll all come together to prevent child abuse.

VISITOR

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Before I break into petitions, I would like to bring to the attention of the Ontario Legislature that, in the east members' gallery, we have a former member of provincial Parliament, Mr. Frank Klees, representing—

Applause.

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

Hon. John Yakubuski: Speaker, I'd say looking good, Frank, but he already knows that.

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

Mr. Klees was in fact a member of the Conservative Party. He served in the 36th Parliament representing York–Mackenzie, in the 37th Parliament representing Oak Ridges, in the 38th Parliament also representing Oak Ridges, and then in the 39th and 40th Parliaments Mr. Klees represented Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Klees, it's an honour to have you here. Thank you. Welcome back to the assembly.

PETITIONS

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Jill Andrew: I present this on behalf of Toronto–St. Paul's and our support of \$15 and Fairness.

“Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I proudly sign this and hand it over to my page Marcel for the Clerks.

1540

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I am honoured today to stand to deliver a very important petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario—a petition “To ensure the safety of residents of Ontario,” which reads as follows:

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

CURRICULUM

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I have a petition from my constituents in Guelph.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas young children and adolescents across Ontario are being lured into the sex trade and being sexually exploited every day;

“Whereas many youth have no idea what exploitation entails or that they may fall victim to it;

“Whereas prevention is the best strategy in eradicating human trafficking, education and awareness is key to prevention;

“Whereas incorporating mandatory human trafficking education will ensure our province is doing everything legally possible to protect our precious youth;

“Whereas our younger generations must be properly informed about true consent, the reality of sexual exploitation and the dangers of online predators...;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to include informed consent, sexual exploitation, the warning signs of human trafficking and the dangers of online predators into the Ontario sexual education curriculum.”

I support this petition. I will sign it and ask page Jacob to bring it to the table.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I table this petition, signed by my constituents of Parkdale–High Park. It’s titled “Don’t Take Away Our \$15 Minimum Wage and Fairer Labour Laws.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. David Piccini: It’s a pleasure to table this petition today, a very important one:

Whereas the federal government under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau “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; and

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

Again, it gives me great pleasure to table this. I will affix my signature here and give it to page Andrei.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

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

Ms. Sara Singh: Centre.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Correction: Brampton Centre.

Ms. Sara Singh: Thank you. I’m pretty sure Brampton South would not be reading this petition today.

On that note, I’d like to present this 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;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I am so proud to affix my name to this, and I’m going to send this off with page Marcel.

1550

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I have here today a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads:

“To ensure the safety of residents of Ontario:

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

“Whereas safety, security and peace of mind is of the utmost importance” to the government for the people of Premier Doug Ford; 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 currently to prevent convicted terrorists from accessing privileges in Ontario;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 46”—introduced by my friend the member for Peterborough–Kawartha—“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; and

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

I support this petition. I have affixed my signature upon it, and I pass it to page Harry.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mrs. Anne Paquette from Hanmer in my riding for collecting all those names on the petition. 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” cancer screening service “will only take us backwards;

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

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

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

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ACCESS TO NATURAL GAS ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR L’ACCÈS AU GAZ NATUREL

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 23, 2018, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

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

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Mr. Speaker, on June 7, our government was elected on a commitment that we are going to bring relief to the people of Ontario. Part of the relief commitment is the access to natural gas.

Yesterday, I did mention that access to natural gas is going to save Ontarians roughly about \$800 to \$2,500 a year. That is something. We all look at it as a savings where families can invest that money into their children’s

education or into their retirement income savings, so it's a huge saving.

It's sad that the member opposite from Ottawa Centre has a reputation for being a carbon tax crusader. The member opposite is openly crusading for a carbon tax that will increase gas taxes by 35 cents per litre, Mr. Speaker, which will add \$4,100 in new costs to a family with two cars.

At this rate, Ontarians would be paying one of the highest carbon tax rates in the world. Is this how we grow Ontario, by overtaxing our citizens? Where would the average Ontarian get the money to pay for this? Soon we might not have citizens to serve in Ontario because they have moved elsewhere where the cost of living is lower. In contrast, our government has decreased gas prices at the pump. My constituents are extremely excited about this. Seeing them excited actually makes me excited too.

Many parts of rural and northern Ontario do not have access to natural gas, a cost-effective fuel source. Many homes and businesses are still running on electric heat, propane, diesel or oil, very expensive and potentially dangerous fuel sources. In southwestern Ontario, an estimated 40% of households, farms and businesses do not have access to natural gas.

Rural Ontario contributes approximately \$106 billion to the province's GDP and supports 1.2 million jobs. This data from Stats Canada is based mainly on wages and salaries. It also includes contributions employers make to social insurance plans, such as pension plans, on behalf of their employees, and production of goods and services by unincorporated businesses, such as self-employed people.

The agri-food industry—everything involved in bringing people food from the farm to the dinner table—employs about one in eight workers in Ontario. With natural gas, our farmers would have more opportunities to leverage modern technology to grow our food.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, transit projects across the province are a big priority for us in government. Ontario's current infrastructure agreement with the federal government provides for \$11.8 billion in infrastructure investment across the province, including \$8.3 billion for public transit. Expanding access to natural gas could help support our focus on transit projects as we deliver on our promise to get Ontario moving.

Expanding natural gas could also benefit the mining sector. Mineral production in Ontario supports 26,000 direct jobs and 50,000 indirect jobs associated with mineral manufacturing and processing. Mining is the second-largest private sector employer of Indigenous people in Canada; some 25% of mining jobs in Canada are in Ontario and two thirds of those are in northern Ontario.

Investments in infrastructure have a direct and indirect impact on our economy. In fact, a recent study highlighted some of these benefits. The study found that the long-term economic return to the province, as measured by GDP, is up to \$6 for every dollar invested. But to realize these benefits, it's important to ensure that we invest in the right infrastructure at the right time and in the right place. When done right, investments in infrastructure can help to lower business costs and attract more businesses to Ontario.

1600

As mentioned, any charges for consumers would be minimal compared to the savings that families and businesses would already receive from our government's decision to remove the former government's cap-and-trade carbon tax from natural gas bills.

In our platform, we campaigned on building Ontario. Ontario families deserve major infrastructure investment in both our biggest cities and our smallest towns. By removing the cost of the cap-and-trade carbon tax from gas bills, Ontario families already using natural gas will save approximately \$80 a year, and small businesses, approximately \$285 a year.

Our government has a plan. We are moving away from the previous government's natural gas subsidy program. Instead of a one-time program, our government believes in a long-term, predictable and sustainable approach—a strong difference from the previous government's approach.

We are putting money back into the pockets of the citizens of Ontario, as promised. Step by step, we are rebuilding the trust that the previous government broke by putting accountability back into the system.

Expanding natural gas would make Ontario communities more attractive for job creation. We say Ontario is open for business, and we are putting into place the structures and policies to deliver on that, Mr. Speaker.

This government is not looking at short-term fixes. The proposed new program would deliver decades of benefits to potentially dozens of communities across Ontario. Ontario is open for business. We will provide Ontarians with benefits and cost savings for decades to come.

This is a well-thought-out, long-term plan, keeping taxpayers' needs in mind, as well as Ontario's future growth and prosperity. Ontarians have spoken. Communities that don't have natural gas service want it, Mr. Speaker, and why? Because it is cheap. It makes life more affordable.

Our plan is supported by the private sector. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce recently wrote that Premier Ford's "plan to develop a new natural gas program ... will not only help to make life more affordable for Ontarians but boost job creation and economic growth in rural and northern Ontario communities."

This endorsement tells us that, as legislators here at Queen's Park, we are doing the right thing.

In previous years, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, one of the biggest advocates for natural gas expansion, described natural gas as "North America's lowest-cost and cleanest, most versatile energy source."

"Having no access to natural gas puts rural communities at a competitive disadvantage.... It is difficult to attract new businesses to towns where basic energy expenses will be double, simply because the" basic "infrastructure is not there to access natural gas lines."

Without businesses to provide employment, communities are not built. Who wants to move into an area to pay more and have less?

I know I only have about a minute left, but I want to talk about Mississauga East–Cooksville as well. Mississauga East–Cooksville, like many big cities including the GTA, is experiencing an affordable-housing crisis. Natural gas service will support future housing supply in rural and northern communities.

We have an opportunity to expand and build prosperous communities in other parts of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: It's always a pleasure to be able to join in debates in this House and to provide a few comments on the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville, on the bill short-titled Access to Natural Gas Act.

My recollection of when this was tabled and the press release that went with it is that this was put into place to support rural and northern communities. But I've looked through the bill. I find nowhere where it says "northern and rural." So it makes myself as well as other members of this House who have spoken in depth—the member from Nickel Belt talked about her community not really having the possibility of benefiting from this bill. That's concerning.

The member talked about accountability and transparency. But when you are missing words in legislation, that counts; that counts for something. When your press release has a fully different vision of what the actual legislation reads, it pulls us into question.

It was part of our platform to ensure that people in northern and rural communities did get that access to natural gas, because we know that the Liberals made a horrible mess of the hydro system and rates are unaffordable, and that people are constantly having to make decisions about which bill they're going to pay. I hope that when the government of the day brings this into practice, people don't find the same thing with the natural gas. I'm afraid that that's where we could end up. When you bring privatization, that means profit. People only get into business because they care about profit. Where we're heating our homes and where people have no choice but to make sure they have heating in their home, that should be something that is available and affordable to everyone.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from Sault Ste. Marie.

Mr. Ross Romano: That would be me, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

I'm not sure how to respond to what I just heard. The media release talked about rural and northern Ontario. I'm from northern Ontario, and I can tell you, my community would love to have natural gas across the board.

The fact that it's not stipulated, that the verbiage is not right in there—I find it difficult to conceive how that doesn't mean that it will cover the area, because I'm pretty sure that in this area, there's natural gas everywhere. I'm pretty sure, and I'm quite aware, that in a number of areas of northern and rural Ontario there is a shortage of natural gas. So I suppose, aside from maybe drafting the legislation in large letters in crayon—maybe it will be easier for my friends to understand.

I'm not quite aware of where else the problem exists more than in rural and northern Ontario, the lack of natural gas. I can certainly say that I am very happy and my community is very happy. I know a number of members across the way there who would be very pleased to have natural gas throughout their communities. It is abundantly clear, in my opinion, where the lack of natural gas amenities are. So I'm quite pleased that this bill will address us looking toward developing that infrastructure throughout Ontario, specifically those areas that need it most, being rural and northern Ontario.

Certainly, there's actually a chunk of the member from Algoma–Manitoulin's riding right within my city of Sault Ste. Marie that is already benefiting. The project is already starting to move through that area. But we still have significant numbers of people within Sault Ste. Marie who do not have access to natural gas.

I'm very grateful for the opportunity to be able to put this forward so we can get there.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm going to be speaking at length on this bill a bit later, so I'd like to comment on the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville. Although I disagree with some of his points, I got to listen to 11 minutes, and I appreciated the way he put them forward respectfully. That is the way we should operate in this House.

I hope I never hear again the member of Sault Ste. Marie saying things like my members need things written out in crayon. I take offence to that, and I don't find that that is becoming for members in northern Ontario. Yes, people in northern Ontario need natural gas, and a very good point was raised. The member from Sault Ste. Marie might not agree with it, but there's no reason to try and insult people. I take offence to that as a person from northern Ontario. Most northerners wouldn't do that.

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I hear "northern" and "rural" all the time; I don't necessarily see it in the bill. I talked to the gas companies, and they brought up some issues as well: that some of the people in northern and rural Ontario are basically hoping that this bill is going to do something for them, and it might not. Those are the issues that, as opposition, it's our job to bring up. It's the government's job to bring forward bills. It's the opposition's job to criticize, to make sure that they are the best that they can be or try and stop them if we think they're terrible.

We are in favour of bringing natural gas to rural Ontario. We want to make sure that as many people have access to natural gas as possible. Actually, on this one, we want to work together to do that, but not with comments like the member from the Soo. I hear from one member that we need to work together, and then I get kicked in the face by another member. That is not how to work together.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I'd like to thank the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for his remarks today.

I found they were quite enlightening. I must say, I'm slightly confused, though, about problems with natural gas because, frankly, there is so much hot air coming from the opposition that we could probably fuel a trip to Nantucket and back.

Anyhow, with that being said, this bill here is a wonderful opportunity for us to expand access to something that is clean, abundant and affordable for people in Ontario. You see, natural gas is something that is much more affordable than oil, propane or electric heating, and by switching to it, consumers can save up to \$2,500. This bill is looking at how we can expand natural gas access to as many as 33,000 residents in northern and rural communities.

One of the members opposite commented on how this is going to specifically help northern and rural communities. What are we doing to help northern and rural communities? The truth is, Mr. Speaker, that this is only the second in a long line of initiatives that we're going to do to support those important residents—the first, of course, being the elimination of the wasteful cap-and-trade program.

I note that the Minister of Finance, who has been doing fine, fine work over the past couple of weeks, posted just recently on his Facebook a copy of his Union Gas bill. Of course, the Minister of Finance is from North Bay, the Nipissing region, a beautiful part of northern Ontario. On that bill it read, "The cap-and-trade charges previously included in the delivery line of your bill have been removed." That's savings for northern Ontarians—real savings—and that's what we're going to continue to fight for.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I now return to the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for final comment.

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank all the members from both sides for their comments and their remarks.

One of our campaign promises was to clean up the hydro mess, and that is exactly what we are doing with Bill 32. On average, the savings from switching from electric heat, propane, or oil forms of fuel to natural gas will save Ontario businesses and families approximately between \$800 and \$2,500 per year. As an added bonus, taxpayers will not have to pay for this initiative because we are enabling private sector participation. By enabling the private sector to expand natural gas, we are saving taxpayers up to \$100 million—money that the previous government put aside in grants.

We say that Ontario is open for business, and we are putting into place the structure and policies to deliver on that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It has been an honour to speak on this bill.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I've been looking forward to this opportunity to discuss Bill 32, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998, with all of you today. Let me just say that I know a lot more about natural gas after

listening to the statements of my colleagues and the members opposite.

Initially, I was quite pleased to see the members across the aisle stress the need for affordable energy. This is something many Ontarians support. This is something that, here on this side of the House, we support. But, quite frankly, we only support this bill in name alone.

I agree with the sentiment that natural gas should be made accessible to rural Ontario, to farmers, and expanded into northern Ontario. These are worthwhile goals and I don't think any of us will take issue with it. How could you possibly disagree with any of these ideas? But it's important that Bill 32 actually implements law that serves Ontarians, and I'm not sure that in this bill's current state it does that. Right now it is so loosely organized and so vaguely stated that you could drive a truck through this bill.

As the MPP for London North Centre, I won't sit here and tell you that my riding is a rural riding, nor is it located in the north, despite the fact that it has "North" in its title. But there are households, many of which use natural gas, and they will nonetheless be impacted by this legislation. With that in mind, I'm going to organize my comments around the main concerns that I have with Bill 32 as it stands today.

As I said, these questions relate to the specificity in this bill. We would like to see that this bill specifically name rural, north and Indigenous. It's a simple thing to add, but it also would guarantee that these services will reach those communities.

Northern communities are desperate for natural gas expansion. It is something that they would absolutely welcome, something that they have been talking about for many, many years, and on this side of the House we were proud to campaign on that exact promise. It was in our platform. I know many have said that on the opposite side of the House they never really had a platform, so we still are waiting to see it. Maybe it's in the desk over here; I don't know—no, still haven't found it.

When we're talking about expanding natural gas into northern communities, allowing the private sector to participate is absolutely fine. But where is the guarantee that they're actually going to get natural gas service out to those communities? It provides only the opportunity. It's like, if this legislation were to pass, people should simply cross their fingers, hope for the best and listen to the debate in this House. But that debate and all the pleasantries and promises from the other side don't equate to good legislation, nor will they force or enforce that private companies get that service out to northern communities.

Businesses are great, and businesses are the backbone of Ontario. They give people jobs. They allow people to provide for their families. But we have to differentiate business versus government. Businesses and private enterprise are driven through the need to create profit. Governments should be looking after people. Governments, in their creation of legislation, put people above profit. We are requiring on this side of the House that this legislation specifically mention northern, rural and Indigenous

communities so that this bill's intent is reflected in the language that is there.

Earlier in the debate, we were talking about the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and their support of this bill. Absolutely, farms would benefit so greatly from this. It would allow them to heat barns and their homes and, yes, they would support natural gas expansion as well. But where's the guarantee? Where is it shown that it's actually going to reach all of these remote locations? Quite frankly, the bill, as it stands, appears as though it's simply going to contribute to urban sprawl, because there is no specificity. The OFA has endorsed this, but we still have to ask questions, and we want to make sure that it does get to all those people who would benefit the most.

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I've spoken with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture as well, and they also have concerns towards infrastructure in their communities. Those include having good roads, having good bridges, making sure they can get their produce and their commodities to market. Something that they would also like to see is broadband Internet. That would allow farmers and rural businesses to conduct business in a much more modern and comprehensive fashion. That's something that this government should also be touching upon. We take a look in rural communities at roundabouts—how could you possibly imagine getting a tractor-trailer full of goods around a roundabout? It makes absolutely no sense.

Further, when I was speaking with the OFA, we touched on the topic of school closures. We remember that during the last Conservative government, they stripped a billion dollars out of education and schools were closed. When a school is closed, that utterly and completely destroys a rural community. It takes away their identity. It strips a student's desire to actually stay there when they grow up, because they're being transported—oftentimes for 45 minutes to an hour—to another location. They don't have that same character and quality. They don't have that identification with the community. They're simply looking to move.

Further, when we look at infrastructure, right now there is an employment crisis in my riding of London North Centre. There are people who aren't even participating in the labour market. And yet, north of London, there are farms that simply don't have enough labour. We need to find a way to get all the people who are able to work out to those communities—and that would be providing better transport, better transit.

I also am thinking back to the 1930s and the 1940s, when Bell Canada first started laying telephone wires across our country. The government was smart. The government stepped in and didn't allow them to simply cherry-pick, to decide where was the best hit for them, where they should lay telephone lines where they would get the most service. Instead, the government said, "If you're going to do this, then you have to make sure everyone benefits." That's what this government should do, as well. They need to make sure that everyone in Ontario benefits.

We've heard a lot of pleasantries. We've heard a lot of promises. We've heard the opposing side say, "Yes, this will extend to those things," but we don't see that in the legislation. That's the problem. If that's a promise that they're going to make—because they've claimed it here in the House—then it should be reflected in the legislation. Why not include those words: "rural, north, Indigenous"? If it's something they support, then they should simply place it in there.

My colleague the member from Nickel Belt also made a very wise statement. She said that this legislation is actually allowing private companies to reach their hands into Ontarians' pockets. If this legislation were to pass such as it is, it has been said that there will be rate increases. The government has said \$1, but I don't see that in the legislation. So then what is the rate of increase going to be? Is it something that is going to be controlled? Currently, we have the OEB, and they do make sure that rates are controlled. But with this legislation, it opens up Ontarians' pockets, and that's something we have to be frightened of.

We also heard the member from Niagara West, earlier in the debate, talk about revisionism and the Liberals and how they played shell games with money, and I can't say that I disagree. We take a look at the promises from the last government—the \$230 million that they guaranteed for natural gas expansion, which was in 2014. Then, in January 2017, they hadn't spent a single cent. They changed that promise into \$100 million for natural gas expansion, and here we are.

I'm also reminded that we see similar things going on with this government. We see a difference between words and actions. We've heard about the cancellation of basic income called "compassion" alongside "cuts"—two things that do not belong in the same sentence. We've seen minimum wage get cut, and this government also saying that it wants to create good jobs. How does that make any sense? Is this government going to create jobs for a minimum wage earner? Because that seems to be the claim that they're trying to make. All the power to them; I'd love to see that happen.

This legislation simply does not say enough. I want to remind the government of what happened, once upon a time, in an earlier Conservative government when hydro began to be split apart and privatized. It was the last Conservative government that started it, and it was the next Liberal government that really drove the stake in, in terms of privatization. Now we are all suffering; everyone across Ontario is suffering from hydro rates that are absolutely inexcusable, that are driving people out of their homes. People are having to choose whether they're going to put food on the table or turn their electricity on. It's simply unacceptable. This legislation, however, seems to provide that same sort of opportunity. It's creating the way for privatization. It is giving far too much power to private enterprise.

We also, as I mentioned earlier, need to specifically mention Indigenous communities. There are around 200 Indigenous communities, and they rely on diesel generators because they're not on the electric grid. We know that diesel is filthy. We know that it's unreliable. We know

that it requires that shipments are made to these communities, and there can be things like fuel spillages and shortages. It's simply not something that is tenable and not something that is acceptable within our modern world.

Bill 32 could fix this. It has that opportunity. Like I said, it's something we can support and we want to support, but we simply can't support it the way it is. There's no timeline on this bill as well. There is no guarantee of when this is actually going to happen. Like I said before, you could drive a truck through this legislation.

We can't have any more empty government promises for Indigenous people. We've heard them all before. We've seen no action. We know that there are 50 Indigenous communities that still are under boil-water advisories. How long can that go on? How long will we accept that these people are being treated as though they are in a Third World country?

I implore this government: Let's get it right on this bill. Let's do the right thing. Let's mention rural, north and Indigenous, and make sure that that service gets out to those areas.

We also have to remember that the money is going to have to come from somewhere. This government has cut the \$100-million grant that was to get the service out to these communities. But let's face it: Money does not come from nowhere. The private companies that are going to create these lines aren't going to do it out of the goodness of their heart. It's not because they're not good people, but they are good business people. They need to find their profit somewhere. So this government has said that there might be a small increase to the rates, to the charge for natural gas, but the word "small" is an evaluative term and does not specify exactly what that rate increase will be. That's something we need to be frightened of. That's giving far too much power to a private enterprise.

I also wanted to touch on the messages from the member from Mississauga East—Cooksville. He had mentioned that this government had decreased gas prices. I just wanted to point out for everyone assembled here and all the viewers at home that something happens every year, and it's called winter gas. Gas prices go down every single year. That's not something that this government can take credit for. It's something that we have all seen. So let's face it: It's something they should actually not try to take credit for. But in these statements about what this legislation is going to do, we've heard from this government a lot of conjecture, a lot of predictions and many statistics that don't necessarily have merit or won't necessarily ring true.

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The member also mentioned investing in infrastructure at the right time. Absolutely; we totally agree. Let's have the government invest in infrastructure. Let's have the government create legislation that ensures that this service will reach northern, rural and Indigenous communities.

I also wanted to touch on the comments from the member from Sault Ste. Marie. He had mentioned that he was pretty sure that these things would be covered. But we can't cross our fingers and hope that this legislation will

do the right thing. It's up to us as legislators to make sure that this legislation is rock solid, that it does what it is intended to do, not to simply sit back and hope for the best.

We've also heard that people are willing to chip in and pay more, and I don't disagree. But how much more? Where's the control? Where is the government oversight?

We also heard that rural communities have a competitive disadvantage, and we absolutely agree. The members on this side of the House are more than willing to work with this government to ensure that this legislation is rock solid, that this legislation is well wrought, that it considers all eventualities and possibilities and it achieves what it is intended to achieve.

Further, I'm really not comfortable with giving private corporations permission to start raising rates without the guarantee of improved service. That is extremely unwise, and it seems to be the case. Under this current legislation, it seems that the government is not actually going to be monitoring to ensure that as rates go up, the service gets out to those communities. That's at the heart of our issue with this legislation.

I worry that what could end up happening is that people will spend more across the board, and it will only contribute to urban sprawl. We have to look at this and we have to consider this. These are, entirely, possibilities that could potentially happen from this legislation.

We hear from this government—they're saying that we fearmonger and we're not working with them. No, we're willing to work with you, but you need to listen. You need to consider things from our perspective, think of things in a way that you haven't necessarily thought of and make the legislation rock solid. It's not that difficult to do.

Earlier in the debate, we also heard the member from Kingston and the Islands touch on the environmental impact of this legislation—and there is one. We must face that. When we take a look at this—it made me think of a recent UN report on climate change. It stated that we need to take action now. The Earth is possibly going to rise in temperature by 1.5 degrees, and the impact of that and the disasters that would happen would be absolutely disgraceful. Northern Ontario would have more forest fires. There could potentially be more dangerous tornadoes in Ottawa. Drought and extensive flooding are another outcome of climate change that could absolutely devastate Ontario's agriculture. If we don't act now on climate change, what will we have left? There is no planet B.

When we think of that, this idea of expanding natural gas into the north might actually become completely irrelevant if we don't act and make sure that we are protecting our planet. We see the changes that are happening. The member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay has mentioned that the flooding that has happened there routinely is changing schools, is destroying buildings. It's making places uninhabitable.

So we look at this bill—oh, I see that I'm running out of time, Speaker. I must say, all we need to do is make sure we have "rural", "north" and "Indigenous," and make sure that there are checks and balances in place in this legislation to make sure that that service actually gets there.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

I will recognize the member from, I guess it would be—well, hold on a minute; we're going to get this straight here.

Ms. Sara Singh: Brampton South.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Brampton South. Oh, the other Brampton South. There we go.

Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, it's Brampton South.

I'm very proud to stand here today to speak to this bill, because we're delivering on our commitments to really make Ontario open for business. We know that with this natural gas expansion we're going to make communities in Ontario more attractive for job creation and for new businesses to open and operate. I'm glad to stand behind a bill that's really looking to do that and really expand on where we can have this natural gas.

In many parts of rural and northern Ontario, families and businesses don't have access to natural gas, so this plan is actually going to take it into almost 80 communities; that's 35,000 households that will have access to this. That's an incredible change from the previous plan that only looked at 11, so this is going to have enormous impacts in those smaller communities.

For the average consumer as well, it's really going to have a lot of savings because the switch from electric heat, propane or oil to natural gas is going to save between \$800 to \$2,500 per year. That's amazing. That's what we were elected to do, to put more money into the pockets of hard-working Ontarians. If we see what this government has already accomplished by the removal of the cap-and-trade carbon tax from natural gas bills—we're going to be saving families a lot of money. I'm proud to stand here and speak to this bill and help the expansion into these smaller communities so that they can be attractive to new businesses as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from Toronto—St. Paul's.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. How are you? It's a pleasure to add my voice to this debate as well on our natural gas access.

I just want to say, while natural gas heating is significantly less expensive than that provided by electricity, oil or propane, as we know, not all Ontarians have access to this energy source.

Coming into this new role as a new MPP, I'm always concerned about equity—equity and equality as well, too. So it's concerning when we realize that those who don't have access to natural gas tend to live in rural, remote and First Nations communities, communities which we know are often the last to be thought of or certainly not seen as priorities. It's time now to make these communities, which are often at the periphery, centre to our attention.

That also includes making bills transparent and naming communities that are impacted by bills. So when my colleague speaks to the fact that the PR or the press release includes the full information but then the actual legislation, which is what we stand by, doesn't, what we're doing

is, we're sending a mixed message to Ontarians. What we're also doing is, we're not practising transparency. One of the things I'm learning, as a new MPP, is transparency is key. We need people to know where their dollars are going. We need to know what we're paying for. We need to be able to be informed Ontarians on every matter, including on every government bill.

To wrap up, with nine seconds left, what I will say is, we're happy to work with the government on any bill that will benefit Ontarians, but we just need to know exactly what that entails before we sign up.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Roman Baber: I've been listening attentively to my friend from London and also to my friend from St. Paul's. By the sounds of it, it doesn't sound like the opposition takes any significant issue with our proposed legislation. I'm looking forward to seeing how they're going to vote come vote time, because I think the legislation makes a lot of sense. All we're doing is allowing more consumers to access natural gas—cheaper gas, cleaner gas. I can't imagine why anyone in this House would be against that.

In too many parts of northern Ontario, Mr. Speaker, families and businesses still do not have access to natural gas. If we can enable such access, well, why not? That also means that for the average residential consumer in Ontario, the switch from electricity, propane or oil to natural gas will result in considerable savings—anywhere between \$800 and \$2,500 a year. That's a lot of money.

This legislation is in line with almost everything else that this government is doing. It's to make life more affordable in Ontario. Too many people in this province are simply unable to afford life. I'm proud to support this legislation because this is another piece of legislation from our government—a government for the people—that will make life in this province more affordable.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I want to start by congratulating the member from London North Centre on a very thoughtful presentation on what this bill means to New Democrats and, quite frankly, what it means to people across the province.

We know that people in northern and rural communities are being stretched beyond their limits when it comes to heating their homes. We've heard very clearly from folks the price that they pay in our very cold winter months in northern Ontario when they just can't afford to do that. We've heard from families who went over a Christmas break because their oil furnace had broken down and they couldn't get anybody in to service that; they couldn't afford it. When they looked into getting natural gas into their home, it was completely unaffordable and not a route that they were able to take.

We know that the need is there. New Democrats put forward in our platform—a platform, again, is the brochures that go out through the campaign. I know the

other party has a hard time understanding that because they didn't have a platform. In our platform, it was very clear that we would provide the money for communities to get access to natural gas.

The Conservative plan has a different way of doing it. They cancelled all the earmarked funds and programs that were going to help that happen. They have a different way of doing it, and it includes privatization. New Democrats have trouble with privatization. We know that privatization equals profits. We have that problem currently in our hydro system, which the Liberals made an entire mess of. Are we going to do the exact same thing to natural gas? Are we going to see people's gas bills across the province being increased?

We have questions and concerns, and that's our job to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now I return to the member from London North Centre for final comments.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the members from Brampton South, Toronto–St. Paul's and York Centre as well as Hamilton Mountain for their thoughtful comments about this issue.

I'd like to just speak to a couple specifically. The member from Toronto–St. Paul's talked about this being an equity issue, and it absolutely is. We need to make sure that this legislation specifically names the communities it is meant to serve. We've heard the government say 78; we've heard it say 80 communities. But we don't see that in this legislation. That needs to be there.

We also heard from the member from Hamilton Mountain, who talked about this being in our platform. It absolutely was. She is 100% correct in saying that we need to get this done right. People are being stretched beyond their limits.

The member from York Centre mentioned that we absolutely do support the end which this should get to, which is service to rural, northern and Indigenous communities. But we cannot vote for legislation that you could drive a truck through. This is so full of holes as to not be believed, and we're pointing them out so that they can be addressed and so that this can be well-created legislation that serves the needs and purposes of everyone across Ontario.

We have heard also that this will save consumers, on average, \$800 to \$2,500 a year, but there is no guarantee of that in this bill. There's no guarantee that people will actually get this service, and that's the problem. Dealing with these pleasantries and saying "\$800 to \$2,500" does not guarantee that they will actually get that. We have to make sure that there is a guarantee that people in the north, in rural communities and Indigenous communities get this service. Otherwise, this legislation is next to empty. It's handing over the keys to private companies to reach into Ontarians' pockets and take out however much they want. It allows them to change the rate, and that's a problem.

We will support this if this legislation is amended.

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

Mr. Doug Downey: I'm pleased to rise in support of Bill 32, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act. I'll echo the sentiments of my colleagues both during our election campaign and as I've listened to them in the House. More importantly, we've expressed to Ontarians the need to expand natural gas across the province. They've told us, and we are, in turn, telling the opposition.

The legislation is going to help facilitate this by encouraging partnerships between gas distributors and communities to help them flourish. Most importantly, it will help make life fairer and more affordable. Things need to be more affordable for families. We've said this over and over. They are the reason that we're here. Not only is life going to be more affordable; it is another signal that we're open for business.

The bill is about fairness. The member from Toronto–St. Paul's talked about fairness. This is about fairness. You might have noticed that this is a theme of our government, just like the government believes that Ontarians shouldn't be treated unfairly based on their postal code when it comes to automobile insurance. We also believe that this bill will create a framework that will make the cost of heating a home fairer across the province. It makes it fairer by expanding the option of natural gas. You have more choice; that's more fair.

Rural and remotely located Ontarians deserve to pay and play on an even playing field. Many haven't been able to do that for far too long, and this needs to change. We're changing this with Bill 32. Changing to natural gas can provide significant savings to a household. The bill is yet another example of how we're making strides. Whether we're cancelling the Drive Clean program or reducing hydro rates, we're putting more money in the pockets of everyday Ontarians. I'm confident that this bill will facilitate yet another great example, when we look back on the accomplishments when we're done.

Think for a moment about a young couple who are looking for a home. There just happen to be three homes beside each other, and I'm going to say that they are blue because that's a pretty good colour. The home is about 1,000 square feet, which is a fairly modest home. The first home that I brought was 900 square feet.

In the first home they go into, they check the bills, and it is electric baseboard. They run the costs; they're on a tight budget. It was going to be \$1,231 a year to heat that little home. They thought that was a little high, so they went next door.

Next door, they had conventional fuel oil. I don't know how many people live in communities where fuel oil is a staple; I do. A lot of my residents in Springwater and Oro-Medonte and whatnot have fuel oil that is either housed in tanks in their basement or outside. It's fairly expensive. This little blue house was going to cost \$1,273 a year to heat, on average.

Then they went to the third house. The third house uses high-efficiency natural gas, and that little house was going to cost \$687 to heat. That's quite a contrast—from \$1,200 down to \$600. I think everybody can follow along: It's

about half. That's a sizable cost-of-living amount of money to put in somebody's pocket.

I know that there's an awful lot I could do with 600 bucks in my pocket, and I'm sure others feel the same. That's why we're fighting for everyday Ontarians: to make sure that the people of this province have the money in their pocket to make the decisions that they want to make.

The problem is, if natural gas isn't available in your area, then you don't get that choice. You don't get the ability to say that you want that available. In my area, again—I'm talking about a little thousand-square-foot house. When you expand that to larger homes of 2,000 or 3,000 square feet or even farms—we've been talking about expanding into that area—it's a sizable difference. It's a lot of money. It adds up to an awful lot of money.

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Mr. Speaker, when I get asked about my journey into politics and what it is I hope to do, my answer is, I hope to come here to fix things, not to manage things. I wanted to come and actually fix some things. This government, in 115 days, has fixed an awful lot of things. I'm so proud to stand here with this bill in front of us and say, "This is another thing that we're fixing."

The previous government was going to expand into 11 communities; we're going to expand into up to 80 communities. Not only that, the \$100 million that they had parked to spend—we're going to partner with the companies to do it on a more sustainable basis so that we can expand into up to 80 communities. Think about it: up to 35,000 households. That's unbelievable. It's such a change. Ontarians wanted change, and they're getting that kind of change.

It will increase our agricultural competitiveness and it will help our rural economy thrive. In my riding, in Oro-Medonte and Springwater, there are a lot of agricultural facilities, a lot of farms and processors. It's a pretty important input cost for them.

I also know that natural gas has helped rural areas all across Ontario. The member from the London area spoke earlier. It's interesting. I came to learn, before I came to politics, how natural gas is stored. It's quite fascinating. A lot of it is down around the London area. It's actually pumped underground and held in caverns. They can then store and bring it out later. It's not like wind energy, where you only get it when the wind blows. This is a sustainable type of energy that we can use.

I want to get back to the agri-food sector. It's one of the world's most diverse in Ontario, with almost 50,000 farms in this province. It contributes \$106 billion to the province's GDP and supports 1.2 million jobs. That's one in eight jobs in Ontario, one in eight Ontario workers. This is a sizable community that we need to support on every level, and we're doing it. This government is committing to making sure they aren't left behind and they're not left out of our plans. That's why this government is presenting a much more efficient plan. Our predecessors brought in a plan that would only help a handful of people. This helps an awful pile of people—up to 35,000 households and

other businesses. We're going to make sure that they get natural gas, and they get natural gas sooner. They at least have the choice for it.

The previous Liberal government actually speculated—Glen Murray speculated—that we're going to have to move people off natural gas. I don't know, Mr. Speaker, if you remember that conversation. It was a little bit raucous.

Mr. Bill Walker: Sadly, yes.

Hon. John Yakabuski: Yes.

Mr. Doug Downey: It was so raucous, Mr. Speaker, that it got Yak all excited, and he had to then speak to it.

Look, we have to be realistic about what our economy needs. You can get fancy with experimenting on a few things, like the way the government got carried away on wind energy and that sort of thing. But back to the fundamentals: Natural gas is here. It's sustainable. It's clean. It's cheaper. People want it. We have the ability to get it to them. There is absolutely no reason why we wouldn't.

I hear the opposition talking about, "Well, if you do this in the bill, then maybe we'll support you," or "If you do that in the bill, maybe we'll support you." Mr. Speaker, they're talking about things like regulations and process. What's happening in this bill is that we're starting the process to make sure that all of those things can happen.

The previous schemes were inefficient and ineffective. Ours is well thought out. Minister McNaughton has put together a plan that is going to service, and quickly, the areas in this province that need exactly this kind of service. We're going to continue to work with communities and utilities to address the ongoing demand for natural gas infrastructure. With a natural gas expansion support program in place, we'll be able to consider applications and move forward.

It was an interesting way that they tried to develop it before, but we're going to stay the course. We're not going to flip-flop on things. We're not going to spend the government's money where private industry can help expand instead. We value those partnerships. We don't think that they're suspect, like the opposition does.

We think that this hasn't moved quickly enough before. We're going to move very quickly. This is very important, that we do that. It's not a limited plan. It has the support, Mr. Speaker, of stakeholders all over the province. Our plan is supported by the federation of agriculture, by the chamber of commerce and by Ontarians all over the place. We heard it at the doors. I heard it at the doors when I was knocking on doors in my riding, and I know that others heard it at the doors.

I have no doubt that when this bill passes, if this bill passes and when this bill passes, there will be another round of people who say, "We want it too." We'll move as fast as we can and as efficiently as we can to make sure the people of Ontario not only have the services and have the choice, but actually have money left over in their pockets, and that businesses who are looking at Ontario understand that we're open for business on every level, whether it be reducing taxes, whether it be reducing auto insurance, whether it be providing natural gas at cheaper cost than other forms of energy.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very excited about this bill, and I look forward to unrolling this across the province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: As I said previously, I'm always pleased to have the opportunity to stand in this House, to listen to the debate, to speak to the debate, to talk about what matters to Ontarians. This is one of those bills. This is something that is extremely important to many people across our province.

The member, in his 10 minutes, talked about us criticizing the bill and saying that we would support it if we did this and if we did that. Well, the government consistently says that we need to work together, and you know, when you work together, that means you have to hear another side of it. If the only reason they want us to work together is because we're going to agree with them, then that's never going to work.

We have a job and a duty to Ontarians to ensure that we question the job of the government. That is the job of the official opposition: to ensure that when legislation is brought forward, we pick it apart and we talk about what could be different, what could make it better. That's how you work together, opposition—opposing comments, opposing opinions, because when we have differing opinions, when we talk about them, we then should find a balance. We should then get to a better place.

But as I recall so far, under this government, anything that we have put forward, they have denied. That's not working together. That's the government who is calling us to work together. It's a little difficult to work together when you deny every option that we put forward, every idea that we put forward. So I'm happy to continue speaking to this bill, and look forward to his finishing comments.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: Thank you to my colleague from Barrie–Springwater–Oro-Medonte and to the member from Hamilton Mountain. Thank you both for your comments. Two minutes is never enough; I always say that when I stand up here.

To the member from Barrie–Springwater–Oro-Medonte: With your story at the beginning about the three little houses, I couldn't help but think of the three little bears, Goldilocks and the three bears.

Mr. Doug Downey: The last one was just right.

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: The last one was just right, the natural gas. The great thing about this bill—

Hon. John Yakabuski: Tell us about the three bears.

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: I could tell you about the three bears, but I want to talk about natural gas and Bill 32.

The great thing is that you said “choice.” You said “choice,” and that's the best part about this. What we've done so far since we've formed government is, we have done things that have helped with affordability, with choice, trying to help the economy: things like cancelling the Drive Clean program; things like expanding access to natural gas, which is what we're talking about here today; things like scrapping that awful cap-and-trade and fighting

the carbon tax, which is fantastic; and repealing the Green Energy Act. I look at all that we've done since we've formed government, and these are all steps, these are all bills that we've tabled that are going to help the economy, that are going to help everyday citizens and, most importantly, the businesses who are supporting the economy. These are steps we're taking to help.

1700

This is one of the reasons why I entered politics, much like you, in order to make a change and—wearing my mommy hat—to make sure that there is a viable future for my son and any future children I may be so blessed to have, to make sure that this is the Ontario that my father chose to move to from Trinidad back in the 1970s, when there was lots of opportunity and a lot of room for improvement.

Thank you for your comments, and thank you for the opportunity to speak today, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? I recognize the member from Scarborough Southwest.

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you, Speaker, for that enthusiasm for Scarborough Southwest. It's an honour to stand here and speak to this bill. I want to thank the member for bringing the bill forward, as well as the member opposite and the member on this side of the House for speaking to it.

We spoke about the wording of this bill. Every time I hear the words “efficiency” or “choice” by the government, it makes me worry. Because what we notice is that, time and time again, we hear the government point out the word “choice,” and what they're really saying is privatization—taking power away from the hands of the public. When we talk about efficiency, what it means is cuts by the government to essential services.

Speaking to this bill specifically, I understand the motive here, the intent here. Yes, you want to expand it to all the communities. If that is true, then why hasn't anyone in this House yet on the government side committed to say, “We will include northern Ontario in here”? That's what we're worried about. We want it to include all parts of Ontario, specifically northern Ontario. If you really mean to help northern Ontario, then why is that word not anywhere included in the wording of the bill? Because if the intent is correct, if you have that honest feeling towards northern communities, then let's be honest and let's include that—

Hon. John Yakabuski: That's why we're continuing to debate.

Ms. Doly Begum: That's why I'm saying my piece as well, that these communities are falling behind. There were grants which have been cancelled. What we need to do is make sure that we help those communities. So if we're being honest about helping those communities in northern Ontario, then let's make sure that it's actually enshrined within the bill. And that's all I'm going to say.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Amy Fee: It's my honour to stand here today to talk about Bill 32, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998.

In speaking to what my seatmate and the member from Cambridge was saying about the future for her child and being here because she wants to ensure her child and any future children she may have will have a bright future in this province, that is certainly one of the main reasons why I'm here. As a mom of four, I want to ensure that we bring down the debt, that I don't saddle my children with debt, that I make sure that life is affordable for my children when they grow up.

I was lucky enough to have my son here with us in the House this morning for question period, and just holding onto that, grounding us as to why we're here, and remembering those conversations we had at the doors and that we have daily in our constituency offices or on the phone with our constituents, it is so key that we make life more affordable for families. That's exactly what this bill will do: make life more affordable for families, especially in our rural communities, where they have struggled for the last 15 years under the Liberals—make life more affordable especially around their energy costs. For families, that can save upwards of \$2,500 a year by switching, if they choose, from electric heat or oil to natural gas to make life more affordable for them; or bringing the opportunities for when we have businesses that now will have cheaper operating costs if they flip over to natural gas as well.

As the member from Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte said, he represents a rural riding and he's talking about how this will make rural areas in Ontario thrive. That is why we are here, Mr. Speaker. We want to ensure that Ontario thrives across the province, whether that is in the city or in a rural area. We are making Ontario open for business and making life more affordable for families right across this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now I return to the member from Barrie–Springwater–Oro–Medonte for final comments.

Mr. Doug Downey: Thank you to the members from Hamilton Mountain, Cambridge, Scarborough Southwest and Kitchener South–Hespeler. We do have some common ground which we can build upon. It is heartening to hear that the opposition does want to work with us on this, because it affects all of our constituents, it affects all of Ontario and it affects the economy.

To move from 11 communities to up to 80 communities and up to 35,000 households and then businesses and agriculture on top of that: The magnitude of this initiative by the Minister of Infrastructure is phenomenal. It's such a big piece. We do a lot of things in the House, and we talk about a lot of different perspectives, but we can all agree that people need the choice to use natural gas.

I guess the only disagreement that we have is maybe an uncertainty on how we get there. I'm hearing the opposition suggesting that privatization is taking away from somebody. I want to go back to the Liberal plan, which

was to take \$100 million of taxpayer money—\$100 million of taxpayer money—and make choices for Ontarians instead of letting those choices be made by themselves. That is the difference in this party: We believe people aren't always up to something when they make their own choice.

That \$100 million of taxpayer money doesn't need to be spent; there's a better way to do it. It's partnering with the companies who can put this infrastructure out there in a faster, grander, greater way to allow all of our communities, the rural communities, to have better access to resources.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House, and today to talk about natural gas in rural Ontario. I've heard "northern" and "rural" so many times today—and I'm qualified; I come from northern Ontario. I've made my living on a farm my whole life so I think I can talk about "rural."

Who in northern and rural Ontario wouldn't want more access to natural gas? I have lobbied for that myself. One of the people I lobbied for—actually before I became an MPP, we were part of a group. We worked really hard to save our local cheese factory, Thornloe Cheese. They heat their boilers and stuff with propane. They need natural gas; it would make a huge difference. We've got an industrial park; it would make a huge difference. Grain-drying operations—it would make a huge difference.

I'd like to thank the federation of agriculture. They've worked for years and years, pushing various governments. The former president Don McCabe, the current president, Keith Currie, vice-president Peggy Brekveld and others pushed like crazy for natural gas.

Under the Liberal program, at first they were going to promise \$200 million, and it never came. Then they promised \$100 million. Then the money just started getting announced with the election. We know the story. And now this government has cancelled the program. One of the projects was in my riding. It was actually to bring natural gas to Taylor Mine. One of the other members today mentioned how big a difference natural gas would make to mining. It makes a huge difference. I spoke to the representatives from Taylor Mine. I spoke to the gas companies; I'll get to that later. They're trying to work on something to replace that.

When this bill came forward, and the press releases were—they're great. The press releases are, "Oh, this is going to make a huge difference in northern Ontario." In all the speeches, the government is doing their best to put their best foot forward. That's the way politics works; I've not got a problem with that. That's the government's job, to put their best foot forward. It's our job to criticize.

So I'm looking at what the bill actually says. What the bill does: It allows gas companies to basically cross-subsidize new infrastructure. So people can have a couple of bucks a month added to their bill, and that will help subsidize infrastructure in places where it currently isn't economically feasible. That's the roadblock, and that's what this bill does. Okay? And that's all this bill does.

So I had a meeting with Union Gas and Enbridge—they're one company now—to talk about how this bill was going to work for rural and northern Ontario, specifically for my riding. We used my riding as an example for how this bill was going to work. I said, "Oh, this is going to be great. So basically they're going to build a pool of money." "That's right. But it's restricted because we can only add \$1 or \$2 to people's bills a month, so it's going to be a slowly developing pool."

1710

But it became apparent that—and I don't blame private companies for wanting to make a profit. When I had a farm, it was a private enterprise, and I wanted to make a profit. They're going to focus that pool of money on where it makes the most sense to make money for them. I don't blame them for that. But that doesn't specifically mean—I keep hearing "northern and rural." If I were the gas companies and I were going to use the program, the first thing I would do is in new subdivisions so it would make gas infrastructure cheaper for the new houses. I believe that one of the members said something about that, how that makes economic sense for this program.

It doesn't make economic sense to specifically go to northern—and the way the government is talking, it's like, "northern," where I live, "and deep rural, where there is one house every half a kilometre." That's not what this bill is going to be servicing. Let's make that clear. If I'm wrong, I hope that they put something in amendments to this bill that changes that, because that is what this bill is going to help.

Is it going to help some people? Yes, it's going to help people in the suburbs—probably in the suburbs of Sault Ste. Marie and maybe in the suburbs in North Bay. But it's not going to help people in Timiskaming and Cochrane. They keep talking about northern and rural. When people hear "northern and rural," they think of very small towns in rural and they think of northern like "north of the tree line." It's not going to help there.

I asked a few other things. I asked, "Okay, so let's say there's a program that does, so maybe one of ours does qualify." I said, "It's great, because we've got a farmer with a grain dryer and he will benefit." "Oh, whoa, whoa, whoa. That doesn't qualify under this program because that's commercial and you can't cross-subsidize consumers with commercial." So the \$2 that comes off my colleague's bill and the \$2 that comes off the people on the other side—because they're consumer customers, that \$2 can't subsidize somebody who has a grain dryer, because that's a different class. It doesn't say that in this bill, but that's the truth.

While the government is putting their best foot forward—I don't blame them; that's the government's job. But they're actually not going to have as big an impact as what they're saying.

I mentioned the OFA. The OFA supports this; of course they do. Why wouldn't they support something that has half a chance of getting one more farmer on natural gas?

Mr. Bill Walker: Hear, hear.

Mr. John Vanthof: "Hear, hear," says the government whip. But there's no guarantee, the way the government is speaking, that all farmers are going to have access to natural gas because of this. Quite frankly, that is not the truth. That's why people get so disillusioned with politicians and politics, because the promises are often much bigger than actually when the details come out.

Hon. John Yakabuski: But you'd get it to every concession.

Mr. John Vanthof: No. The Minister of Transportation is heckling me about how he'd get it to everyone, but I have heard that up to so many thousand people are going to be serviced—up to. I've heard "northern and rural" all afternoon, but they actually aren't saying the details of how northern and rural would benefit directly from this program.

A farmer who is looking for access for his grain dryer—because the difference between natural gas and propane for a grain dryer on a farm is the difference between making it and not making it. Farmers are listening to this debate today—and you guys represent farmers—thinking, "All right, finally." And do you know what? Under this, it's not going to happen. Thornloe Cheese: "Wow, finally, somebody is waking up." Under this, it's not going to happen.

Hon. John Yakabuski: It's not going to happen tomorrow, that's for sure.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's not going to happen at all with this piece of legislation, to the Minister of Transportation—not with this piece of legislation.

I'm very, very interested in bringing natural gas to as many places as it's economically feasible. I agree that it has to be economically feasible. But this piece of legislation isn't doing what the government is promising, and that is a problem.

Do we want to work with you on this legislation to make it better? Yes, we do. But you have to make sure that you spell out who you're going to benefit. Why many of my members have said "northern and rural": Spell it out, because they're not going to be helped nearly as much as you're saying, specifically about the cross-subsidization.

If I'm wrong, I will be very happy to be corrected. It will make a big difference to people in rural Ontario. If this bill can bring natural gas, cross-subsidized, from consumer customers to commercial operations, like grain dryers, like mines and like Thornloe Cheese—I'd be very interested to see how that's going to happen, because with this piece of legislation, it's not.

Hon. Todd Smith: You're finally going to join us.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm trying to tell it like it is. I'm not taking potshots; I'm trying to tell it like it is.

I hope to be corrected. I hope we can actually come up with a program. I hope this actually brings some relief. But there's no guarantee to people in northern and rural Ontario that this bill is going to bring them access to a cheaper energy source like natural gas.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the members opposite, and all members from all parties, for speaking today.

The member opposite said that he wants the facts, as someone who proudly hails from northern Ontario, no doubt. I want to remind him, if I may, that the people of his region do not want electricity energy to be more expensive. They do not want government to make it more punitive to drive to work or get their product to market.

I find it curious when members, particularly from remote and northern regions of this province, speak about the ills of affordability, but yet they sit idle when they have an opportunity to stand with us in the defence of our provincial interests, to stand up against a job-killing carbon tax. We cannot see these things in isolation.

You talk about affordability, and I believe, sir, that you mean it. But in order to achieve that objective, you should not be sitting there and applauding the federal Liberals while they oppose a debilitating carbon tax on the people of this province, with great respect to the member.

Let's be clear: The FAO of this province suggested that a carbon tax imposed on the people will cost over \$600 to families. This is not an abstraction. If we increase taxes, particularly on those in northern regions and in rural parts of this province—they are forced to drive. It is an absolute condemnation on those who have to use a vehicle to get their kids to school or, God forbid, get their product to market.

We must advance an agenda of affordability. The only way we're going to do that, the only way we're going to help lift people up, increase income mobility, is by cutting taxes and is by standing against the federal Liberals while they impose the most regressive taxes possible.

We're not alone. Saskatchewan, Manitoba, even Alberta—the New Democrats in Alberta have put a pause on this plan—Manitoba, PEI and now Ontario stand united against the Liberals. We are doing this because, yes, natural gas, electricity and every other form of energy should be affordable for the people of this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Doly Begum: I want to thank the member from King–Vaughan for his comments, and the other speakers.

I want to make one thing clear: The NDP is not applauding the Liberal Party, whether it's the Ontario Liberals or the federal Liberals. We are for the people. We're standing up with the people. What we are doing is standing up with all the communities of Ontario. It's really important to recognize that.

Yes, you preach that you're for the people, but you're for the rich people. I'm sorry to say that, because you completely forget who the real people of Ontario are and how much they are struggling.

1720

I want to also point out the fact that one thing the member from King–Vaughan pointed out is that we need to make sure that we lift those people up. Things like natural gas, things like affordable living, affordable care, are what is going to make sure that we lift those people up, and it's

really important to provide those opportunities. What we're arguing here is to make sure that whatever that bill may be, it's actually providing that opportunity, it's actually bringing this service to those communities. It's to make sure that we don't just pass something in the House and forget about the actual communities that are at risk, but instead making sure that we put in the bill that we'll actually serve those communities.

It's one thing to talk about rural Ontario and northern Ontario, but to actually act on it—there are people within northern Ontario who don't have drinking water. Our Indigenous communities don't have drinking water. It breaks my heart to know that we live in a country like Canada and people still don't have clean drinking water. I completely understand and respect those of you who have it in your heart to help those communities, but we have to make sure that our heart is in the right place when we move a bill, for example, to make sure that we are helping rural Ontario and northern Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Roman Baber: It's nice to stand up again this afternoon to speak on this bill.

First, to my friend from Timiskaming–Cochrane: The point of the legislation is affordability for as many people as possible. Thank you; we are in fact putting our best foot forward. This legislation will enable further development of northern communities. Some of it will be more dense than others, but we could use some more density in northern communities. We have a lot of young people leaving the north, leaving your riding, leaving North Bay, leaving Sault Ste. Marie. We are of the view that delivering natural gas to communities, thereby providing for more density, will not only be good for those communities, but also for the remote communities that you speak of.

I also want to respond very quickly to my friend from Scarborough, who suggested that this party only looks out for rich people. I've been so happy to look at the FAO's report to suggest that our elimination of cap-and-trade is going to save about \$300 per family on average. I heard my friend from the opposition, from Toronto–Danforth, last week say, "Well, what's \$300? \$300 is nothing." Well, you know, \$300 is a lot of money—

Miss Monique Taylor: That's out of context.

Ms. Doly Begum: That is not true.

Mr. Roman Baber: Fine. I heard him say that, but it doesn't matter. I don't propose to argue with you.

But \$300 is three youth Metropasses or three to four pairs of jeans. It's three pairs of sneakers for the average family. That might not seem to be a lot for the member from Toronto–Danforth, but it's certainly a lot to the members of this government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from Brampton Centre.

Ms. Sara Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for getting it right. I appreciate that very much.

It's a real pleasure to stand here today and speak and provide some comments and feedback with respect to Bill 32, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act. As

we've heard from many of my colleagues on both sides of the House today, we're here to work together. I would absolutely, as I've said on many occasions, like to be able to do that. I think it's really important that we also acknowledge that our job as members of the official opposition is to raise important points for consideration by the government to take into consideration for the legislation that they're proposing.

As many of my colleagues have mentioned today, there are some things missing in the act. They're critical pieces, little pieces of language. Some are arguing that the semantics of it are really not important, but they are. I think making sure that we're clarifying who we're going to be serving, why we're expanding in the communities that we're going into, is important in the legislation that we're putting forward.

As many have said, we need some more clarity around ensuring that those in Indigenous and First Nations communities will also be able to access more sources of natural gas. As we've heard, there are many communities in the north where, on reserves, folks do not have access to clean drinking water. So those also need to be priorities that we take into consideration.

With this expansion into rural communities, it's very important that businesses are put into the forefront here. As my colleague, my seatmate here, indicated, there are many businesses that actually will not be serviced with this act. They aren't included in this. That's a real concern for us.

We're going to continue to try to find ways to work together, so I think we should really take into consideration some of the comments and concerns that have been raised by the members of the opposition here today, especially those from rural communities who have the experience to understand the situation in their communities and why the expansion is so important. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Now I return to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane for final comments.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank the members from King–Vaughan, Scarborough Southwest, York Centre and my seatmate from Brampton Centre.

It was interesting that several, specifically the member for King–Vaughan—I asked a specific question: whether businesses would be eligible under this program. It wasn't answered. The member from King–Vaughan didn't even touch the bill, basically. The others—

Mr. Stephen Lecce: You don't think carbon taxes are going to raise people's gas bills?

Mr. John Vanthof: To the member for King–Vaughan, who is heckling me, is a carbon tax a part of this bill?

What we're talking about in this bill is whether people who live in true rural and true northern Ontario—we're not talking about the big five cities—will actually be helped by this bill. I asked that specific question. We will ask that specific question in committee because this bill is being sold by the government as if it's going to be the answer for northern and rural Ontario's access to gas. That is how this

is being sold. If it's going to be sold that way, we want to make sure that as many people can actually benefit from it. If it's only going to be benefitting the big five in northern Ontario, we want that said, because that's what I see. That's what I see.

We need to see how that's going to work, because when you ask the gas companies how this bill is going to work—and they're very up front with this. If you ask the gas companies, it's totally different from what the government is saying. The government never told me that farmers wouldn't qualify under this because they're commercial; the gas companies did.

It's one thing to sell a program; it's another thing to actually sell it on its true merits. That hasn't been done here.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: I'm very pleased to rise today to speak on Bill 32, the Access to Natural Gas Act. I've been listening to the debate. What I hear from the opposition is that they're in favour of access to natural gas, so they're hopefully going to be supporting this bill. The only thing they're saying that is critical is—they seem to not trust that this bill will actually promote access to natural gas, but that's what we're certainly trying to do here. We look forward to hearing more detailed suggestions about how it could be improved, if you like.

I'm lucky enough to have the privilege of representing the people of Eglinton–Lawrence in this place. As many of you know, that's an urban riding in the middle of the city of Toronto. For the most part, my constituents have ample access to natural gas and other sources of energy, so why am I speaking about this legislation today?

Quite frankly, it may be easy for those of us in the city to take our access to energy for granted, but for too many Ontarians living in rural and northern parts of the province, this situation is very different. Many families and businesses in rural and remote communities still do not have access to natural gas, which is one of the most efficient and cost-effective energy sources available for cooking, home heating and many other uses.

Our government understands that people are facing high energy bills, especially if they have to depend on electricity, oil or propane to heat their homes. Ontario's hydro rates, unfortunately, are among the highest in North America, and this has forced far too many people in recent years to choose between eating and heating. There's got to be a better way, and thankfully there is. It's natural gas. One of the reasons natural gas is such an affordable option for heating homes is the abundance of supply.

1730

According to Union Gas, "Natural gas is more affordable now than it was a decade ago, and experts agree that natural gas will continue to be competitively priced well into the future."

Make no mistake: One of the driving forces behind this legislation is affordability. It's no wonder that demand for expanded natural gas access across Ontario is high.

Our government has heard from families, businesses and communities that natural gas expansion is important to grow businesses, create jobs and compete. The efforts of the previous government simply did not help expand this important energy source to rural communities. In fact, when they weren't musing about completely eliminating the use of natural gas in Ontario, they went out of their way to deliberately limit the involvement of the private sector in expanding natural gas to new communities. Their previous taxpayer-funded grant program was neither effective nor efficient in achieving its goal.

I'm proud to say that our government is doing things differently. Our government made a promise to provide the people of Ontario with relief for their energy costs and to provide energy which is affordable, accessible and can benefit everyone in the province of Ontario. Instead of a program that hand-picks a small number of communities at the taxpayers' expense, this legislation will open the possibility for natural gas expansion to a much larger number of communities in Ontario—meaning affordable home heating, money back in people's pockets, and opportunity for businesses and jobs.

If passed, Bill 32 will encourage private gas distributors to partner with communities and develop projects that expand access to affordable and efficient natural gas in remote, rural and northern communities. This bill will enable the private sector to deliver natural gas to more than 70 communities, encompassing 33,000 new natural gas customers across Ontario over the next several years, and this means significant savings for many Ontarians.

Estimates suggest that the average residential consumer in Ontario would save between \$800 and \$2,500 per year just by switching from electric heat, propane or oil to natural gas. On this side of the House, we like to talk about putting money back into people's pockets—and on that topic, the good news doesn't stop here. By removing the cost of the cap-and-trade, as my friend from King-Vaughan indicated, that carbon tax removed from natural gas bills, we've saved families approximately \$80 a year and small businesses approximately \$285 a year. That's money that can make a real difference for families and businesses across Ontario.

We're very proud to send a crystal clear message that Ontario is open for business. This legislation will help ensure competitiveness and a thriving rural economy.

I don't need to remind this House that Ontario's agri-food sector is one of the world's most diverse, with almost 50,000 farms, contributing \$106 billion to the province's GDP and supporting 1.2 million jobs, or one in eight Ontario workers. And the expansion of natural gas is good for the growth of the agri-food sector and practically every other industry that can benefit from access to more affordable and more efficient energy sources.

How are we going to accomplish this, Madam Speaker? As I said, under the proposed program, communities would partner with gas distributors to bring forward natural gas expansion applications to the Ontario Energy Board. We would also enable natural gas distributors to add a small charge to existing customers' natural gas bills

to help cover the cost of expanding the access. This charge would be more than offset by the savings that families and businesses will receive from the cancellation of the cap-and-trade carbon tax.

Our government understands that people are facing high energy bills, especially if they have to depend on electricity, oil or propane to heat their homes. Those bills are truly frightening sometimes.

Last month, along with many other members of this House, I had the opportunity to attend the International Plowing Match in Pain Court, in Chatham-Kent—and it was with many of my colleagues. Though I come from good farming stock myself, in Saskatchewan, it was the first time that I ever attended an International Plowing Match. It provided me with a real insight into both the economic contributions made by our Ontario agri-food sector and the challenges faced by rural communities, families and businesses there.

It was at this event that the Premier first announced our government would move forward with new legislation to expand natural gas in rural Ontario. The response we received was very clear: People in rural areas want more access to natural gas. To quote Keith Currie, the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, which represents over 38,000 family farm businesses, "Energy is one of the largest inputs on farms, and we need access to natural gas to help boost the competitiveness of rural Ontario communities, businesses and farms."

He also says, "Natural gas is the single most important investment that will deliver a competitive edge to continue to drive growth in rural Ontario."

"OFA has been advocating for improved infrastructure—including access to natural gas—for many years and looks forward to working with the Ontario government to implement a new natural gas program when the new legislation is in place."

But it's not just the farmers who win through expanding natural gas access; Bill 32 will also benefit sectors outside farming. Rural Ontario contributes \$106 billion to the province's GDP and supports 1.2 million jobs. Think about industries like transportation, as the Minister of Infrastructure noted when he introduced the legislation. The ability for them to establish more natural gas fuelling stations could enable regional bus fleets and commercial and long-haul trucking fleets to switch from diesel to cleaner and more affordable compressed natural gas. That's a win for the pocketbook and a win for the environment.

How about the mining sector, which, as many members may not be aware, is the second-largest private employer of Indigenous people in Canada? Mineral production in Ontario supports 26,000 jobs and 50,000 indirect jobs associated with manufacturing and processing. Two thirds of Ontario's mining jobs are in northern Ontario. Mining is an energy-intensive sector, and access to natural gas will make a big difference in that industry in making sure that it can employ more people in northern communities now and into the future.

Rocco Rossi, president and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, has said that this expansion not only

helps make life more affordable but it will boost job creation.

Access to natural gas is a key part of supporting economic growth in all communities. I'm confident that making a small investment in infrastructure today will have a long-lasting impact in communities for years to come. It's about creating a sustainable path forward for the private sector to participate in this expansion across our province. Allowing private capital to build new gas networks will reduce gas bills for every Ontarian, Mr. Speaker, and that's why I am supporting this important bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm going to get a chance to speak to this in a few minutes, but the interesting thing about this bill—is it all bad? No, there are some things in it that are fine.

What they're essentially saying is, if you're in a residential class and the natural gas company wants to extend service into a suburb in Timmins or Thunder Bay or wherever it might be, the gas company will be able to offset the cost within the entire residential class in Ontario. I guess that's an improvement over what it used to be before, because it will allow some expansion to happen.

But if you get into rural parts of northern Ontario, or rural parts of Ontario, period, there is no mechanism, from what I'm being told by the gas companies—and I've talked to the gas companies, and I've talked to people who work in the natural gas sector, when it comes to government relations people and others. They're saying that, listen, they're not going to have a big rush to expand into rural parts of Ontario, because it's all about economics: how many customers you have versus how much revenue you can get. If you can't get a payback in 30 years, you're not going to be building.

So this bill doesn't do a lot for those more sparsely populated areas in northern and rural Ontario. The government tries to make this out as the be-all and end-all of a program to bring natural gas to rural and northern Ontario—it's what this was supposed to be all about—but leaves it a little bit shy.

The previous government—and that's an argument that the government could put forward—had decided to use tax money by way of the cap-and-trade system to put in \$100 million in order to do some of those expansions, and at least some communities that would normally not get expanded gas service installed, which wasn't economical for the gas company, could have got it. Would it have done everything for everybody? Absolutely not. It was part of trying to respond to a very large problem. But I'll speak to that a little bit more after.

1740

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. David Piccini: It's great to rise today to speak to this. We're proposing a program that would, if the legislation passed, allow more consumers to access affordable natural gas.

Why are we doing this, Mr. Speaker? Because we listened. We listened during the election. I can speak on behalf of members in my community of Northumberland–Peterborough South—the rural community, the farmers. I'd invite the member opposite to join me in rural Ontario, because I, too, spoke to gas companies. I don't know who you spoke to. The usage on a number of these small farms that are going to benefit from expanded natural gas access—their usage far supersedes that of some small communities. We've got farmers in our community who have been calling for this for ages, and we're pleased that we're going to bring that expansion into rural Ontario.

In too many parts of rural and northern Ontario, Ontario families and businesses just still don't have access. For the average residential consumer in Ontario, the switch from electric heat, propane or oil to natural gas would result in savings of \$800 and up to \$2,500 a year. Again, to the members opposite, like we heard from the member from Toronto–Danforth, that's not much to them, but I can tell you that means a lot to rural Ontario folks and a lot to folks in my community.

Expanding natural gas would make Ontario's communities more attractive for job creation. If we're to grow in rural Ontario, if we're to keep rural Ontario vibrant, this is critical to the expansion and growth of our businesses.

Again, we're moving from a regressive system under the previous government that picked and chose winners, that used taxpayer dollars, to a much more forward-looking program that's going to support everyone and that's going to enable the number of projects we're able to support, grow those numbers and bring natural gas to rural and northern Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to add my two minutes' worth to Bill 32 this afternoon.

I just want to start off by talking specifically to the member from Northumberland–Peterborough South and the member from York Centre. You talk about \$300 being a lot to a family. Maybe you should think about that when you are slashing labour protections and not raising the minimum wage. Maybe you should think about that, okay?

The Ford Conservatives have cut every dime of the \$100-million fund to expand natural gas infrastructure to rural areas. They say that this cut is okay because they're going to enable private sector participation. Speaker, we know what that means. It means they're going to go down the same path the Liberals did, which the Conservatives started; the last time there were Conservatives in government, they started it. Liberals privatized our hydro system. When they talk about enabling private sector participation, that is code for privatization of our natural gas, although most of it is already privately owned.

The other thing I want to point out—a history lesson for the new MPPs. When the former Liberal government was putting—

Mrs. Robin Martin: How pretentious.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Pretentious? Excuse me, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Yes, to give us a history lesson.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Pretentious? She may think it's pretentious.

The former Liberal government was putting partisan advertising on hydro bills; the Conservative Party was standing up and opposing it. And now what we have is a bill from the Conservatives that will allow them to put their partisan PC Party advertising in our gas bills. That is shameful. It's a history lesson.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I always enjoy listening to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence because she always comes forward with such a logical and well-thought-out speech.

Mr. Speaker, as a member of the government over on this side, I sit here and I listen to the opposition on either side of me. In my right ear I listen to the NDP, and in my left ear I listen to the Liberals, and it always sounds exactly the same. There's nothing different between either of them. The thing that makes it common is that neither of them are actually interested in pursuing policies with evidence-based support.

Let's take a look at natural gas and this particular bill. When you're considering an energy source, there are three criteria that you want to look at: first, is it an abundant source of power nearby; second, is it affordable to consumers; and third, does it provide relatively good environmental impacts as compared to other energy sources? It seems pretty clear to me that in this case, natural gas and our government's advancement of it meets all three criteria. In terms of abundance, we have 73 trillion cubic feet of proved and recoverable natural gas in Canada. It is an abundant fuel source at our disposal. In terms of affordability, natural gas is more affordable than oil, propane and certainly electric heat, which goes without saying given the disastrous policies that came before us. Lastly, environmental impacts: We know that natural gas is a much cleaner fossil fuel; in fact, it's 50% less emissions than coal.

So we have these three criteria; this meets all of them. Let's follow the evidence. That's why I'm supporting this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I return to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for final comments.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the members from Timmins, Northumberland–Peterborough South, Windsor West and Ottawa West–Nepean for their comments.

Our government made a pledge to make life easier for families and to govern for the people. Since day one, we've been working to keep that promise.

In Bill 32, I think we're taking another significant step forward in our commitment to do things for the people of Ontario and to make life easier for them.

I have to thank my colleague from Ottawa West–Nepean for his compliment about being logical and well thought out in my presentation. Compliments are always appreciated. Thank you.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Gold star.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Make my day.

I also heard some criticisms from the members opposite in the opposition party. The member from Timmins said that we're making this bill out to be the be-all and end-all. I don't think we're doing that. I think sometimes we get stuck in this House on having the perfect be the enemy of the good—I think that's the expression. It doesn't have to be perfect to still achieve good objectives and get us part of the way to where we want to get to. I think this bill will give us some direction, and then we can see if we still have more work to do. I think it's heading, and the members opposite seem to agree with this, in the right direction to get—and I think the member from Timmins actually said that. It will result in more access to more communities for natural gas, and that's affordable. Frankly, that's a good thing. I appreciate the fact that you see that. I hope we can work together to make it the best we can make this bill at this point and to get out there and make sure that we have more access to natural gas for more communities, because everybody wants that to happen. It will make their lives more affordable, and it will make their energy more affordable. That's a laudable goal.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've only got 10 minutes, so I'm going to try to go through this rather quickly.

I think the first question one has to ask themselves is, why is the government going down this road? The previous government tried to do something in order to address the lack of natural gas infrastructure in northern and rural Ontario. This government is trying to do something as well, in a different way. The basic problem we have is, there are a whole bunch of places in Ontario where—if you don't live in an urban area, you do not have natural gas, and you're forced to either burn oil, burn wood or use electricity. So people across Ontario, because all of those things are much more expensive—I'll give you an example. I burn wood where I live. I live at Kamiskotia Lake. It costs me \$1,800 a year, on top of my hydro bill, to burn wood. By the time I pay the surcharge of the insurance and I pay for the wood that I've got to put into the stove to burn, it's \$1,800. That's far more than it would cost me if I was to burn natural gas. Wood is not even competitive with natural gas in some cases, depending on where you live.

1750

But the point is this: Governments were trying to find a way to bring natural gas to those hard-to-serve areas. The previous government said, "We'll take some cap-and-trade dollars, \$100 million, and we'll utilize that so that gas companies can apply for that money in order to extend gas into those areas that are harder to serve." That didn't necessarily mean a suburb in downtown Timmins, North Bay, Thunder Bay or Peterborough. What that meant was Rural Route 4. That meant Government Road. That meant those kinds of places where you have people who live there, either farms or residences, but they're far apart, so the cost is too high for the gas company on an economic point to invest in the infrastructure and get a payback. Because like any business, if you can't get a payback within

a reasonable return of time, if you don't have an ROI, what's the point?

So the provincial government of the day said, "We're going to put \$100 million in." That was one way of being able to use the cap-and-trade money, to be able to do that. Did it fix the problem? No, but at least it went in the right direction. It would end up developing natural gas infrastructure in areas that are currently not served and that wouldn't be served under this bill.

This government then says, "Well, we have to cancel cap-and-trade," and they've got a big problem, because they have promised all kinds of things they can't afford to pay for. They need to save money, so they took out the \$100 million from the cap-and-trade program that was earmarked for expansion of natural gas into rural areas. They took the money back in order to try to balance their budget, which they're not going to be able to do, I think, for quite some time. I'd be very surprised if the budget is balanced at the end of the four years of this administration, but that's a whole other debate.

They said, "Okay, we've got to do something," so they went to the gas companies. I know this because I talked to them. All of us who've been here for a while—Mr. Speaker, yourself and I—know all these players. We know who works at Northern and Central Gas. We know who works at Union Gas. We know the players who deal in this particular industry. What they said was, "If you made it possible for us as a gas company to offset the cost of expansion for residential services across the customer base of residents, we'd be able to utilize that money in order to do expansion."

The problem is that the expansion would only normally happen in areas where there's a high density. In other words, if you have a new subdivision or an existing subdivision in some town somewhere in rural or northern Ontario and you're trying to get natural gas into it, and there are enough customers and the return on investment is maybe 40 years—because of the infrastructure costs, how many people are there and what the revenue will be from that project—this particular project will allow them to possibly go forward, because they can take the cost and charge every resident in Ontario the amount of money it will cost for that particular expansion. It would result in a dollar or two on everybody's bill across Ontario to put natural gas in somebody's subdivision.

Is that necessarily a bad thing? No, I think that's not a bad idea. The problem is, don't sell this like it's going to help the farm community, or it's going to help the industrial base in rural Ontario, or it's going to help the mining industry or anybody else who lives in a rural area or Far North Ontario, because you can't subsidize mining, forestry, agriculture or any of that across the classes. You can only do it through the residential class. In other words, how many mines do you have in Ontario? If you tried to offset the costs of expanding, let's say, natural gas to the Ring of Fire—who knows if that would ever be done—there are only so many mines that you can transfer it off to, that you could share it with. There would be a hue and cry from the mining sector, saying, "Oh, my God. We're

not going to pay for the development of that mine over there. This is way too expensive."

So this only resolves part of the problem. It resolves the problem of how you get natural gas in a small urban setting in rural and northern Ontario. That's what this does. Is that a bad thing? Absolutely not. It's not a bad thing, and that's what I was trying to tell the government. But let's not purport to make this to be something that is going to fix a problem for rural agriculture, the rural industrial base, mining, or forestry, because it won't do anything for any of those.

The second thing—and I just want to touch on this; I've only got four minutes left—is that the government says, "This is really important because people can't afford their electricity bills." I know; I understand quite well. I live in rural northern Ontario, where there is no natural gas. I haven't put it in propane, and I'm certainly not going to burn oil. As I said, I have a wood-electric stove, so that when I'm there I can burn wood and, when I'm not, it's electric. I'll tell you, it's extremely expensive to heat that way. By the time I add up my hydro bill in the winter, it's about \$500 a month, even with the Fair Hydro Plan that the government put in place. And I've got to spend about another \$400 to \$500 a month for the costs to buy insurance and to buy the wood itself. So I'm right back to where I used to be with electricity prices, when they were as high as they were before the Fair Hydro Plan.

Here's the kicker: The government is saying, "We're doing something in order to help people with their hydro bills." The only thing you did is that you adopted the Fair Hydro Plan. Kathleen Wynne and the Liberals put in place the Fair Hydro Plan, where they took the credit card from OPG and they borrowed a potential of about \$25 billion in order to offset the cost of all of us in Ontario when it comes to our hydro bills. My hydro bill in Kamiskotia Lake went down. I used to pay \$1,000 a month; I'm down to about \$500 a month because of the Fair Hydro Plan. But that's money that was borrowed.

What I find really ironic is that the government across the way chastised the Liberals for having mucked up the hydro system—which they did, and I agree with you—but you're adopting their plan. It's not a PC plan. It's not a Ford plan. It's not a plan that does anything different than what the Liberals have done. You've essentially adopted the Liberal hydro plan. We, at least, said, "Listen, we're not going there. We're going to end"—I don't have two minutes to go through the entire plan. But the point is, at least we had a plan that was going to do something different and take us away from what the Liberals had done, because clearly, they mucked up the system.

Again, just in closing, Mr. Speaker—oh, we're almost at that time already. I was just going to say, in closing, let's call this for what it is. Is this a bad bill? No, it's not a bad bill. Is this a bill that will resolve our problems in northern and rural Ontario, when it comes to bringing gas infrastructure into those hard-to-serve areas? It won't. It will do it mostly in urban centres—small urban communities where you need to expand natural gas. It could be Fauquier or it could be Connaught or somewhere else where they need to do an expansion. They may have a

chance to do it as a result of the initiatives in this bill. Because what they're saying is, if the gas company decides to expand into those areas, they can take the cost of expansion and apply it across the entire customer base for residents in Ontario. That means to say that the Clerk of this assembly will help offset the cost of installing natural gas—and the Deputy Clerk as well, and the Clerk of committees, I think it is. You will all have to pay in order to be able to offset.

Is that a terrible thing? No, that's the socialization of infrastructure. But let's not make this out to be something that it's not. We're not saving people money with this. Those who end up with natural gas will save a bit of money, but the rest of the people in the residential classes will have to pay more as a result of expansion. The cost is not being borne by the taxpayer. That's a political choice that the government makes, and I accept that. I don't have a problem with them making that decision. But I think you're trying to sell this off to be something that it's not. I would just hope that the government would at least be straight and say that this is about expansion in small urban areas across rural and northern Ontario, where you can offset the cost across the entire customer class of residents across this province. It's not going to do a lot when it comes to the real problem that we've been trying to solve with this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you.
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MITCH HEIMPEL

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound on a point of order.

Mr. Bill Walker: Although he's not in the House today, I'd like to acknowledge, congratulate and thank Mitch Heimpel. He's a member of our service here. He originally worked for the member from Prince Edward–Hastings, who is now the member for Bay of Quinte, the government House leader and the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. I want to thank him for all of his dedicated service to our province.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Is Mitch leaving?

Mr. Bill Walker: No, he's just celebrating his seven-year anniversary today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'm not so certain that that was a point of order, but it's already done.

Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

1800

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

HOME CARE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member for London–Fanshawe has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. As a result, the member from

London–Fanshawe has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister—or in this case, the parliamentary assistant, the member from Oakville North–Burlington—may reply for up to five minutes.

I now turn it over to the member from London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I have to clarify: When I asked for a late show, it's not that I was dissatisfied; it's that I'd like a little satisfaction to my question that I asked this morning. I actually think we should change it to say, "The late show for some satisfaction," instead of "dissatisfaction."

I'm speaking on a very important issue. This is an opportunity to highlight the concerns around home care in the riding of London–Fanshawe. One of the things that I want to point out: I met with the Ontario Home Care Association this afternoon, and they talked about how they have not had a funding increase for 10 years, and in the last budget the funding increase was 1%.

Part of the problem that we're seeing in many areas where people are depending on services is that there has been literally a mismanagement of the resources and the services that we are delivering to people. This started under the Conservative government. When you think about when the Harris years were in place in this Legislature, they actually privatized home care. They opened it up to privatization. It's no secret that on this side of the House we believe that every health care dollar should be spent on front-line health care, and we think the not-for-profit model is the way to achieve that.

Home care PSWs are run off their feet. They are stretched to the limit. They are running from place to place. They have a situation. I know when I first started as an MPP, I had someone call in, and they talked about the low wages. They talked about the unpredictable hours and how there were no labour protections. One of the things the Ontario Home Care Association talked about is that we need to increase the workforce in the home care sector. Well, how do you make it more attractive? You don't cancel Bill 148, the labour legislation that just happened. That isn't going to make things more attractive for home care workers.

Then we've got families who are actually doing a lot of the caregiving for the loved ones who need the home care. They're in crisis. When you don't have enough hours to deliver home care to the people who need it, the whole system breaks down.

As the NDP critic for home care, I believe we had many solutions during the election. We talked about home care. We had a very thoughtful plan. Did you know there are actually 45,000 Ontarians waiting on a home care wait-list for delivery of service? That's a lot of people. Come the next 10 to 15 years, we're going to have more seniors come into home care. What is this government doing in order to make sure the people who need health care at home are actually receiving it? People get in crisis. They're running to hospitals. They're in alternative-care beds waiting for long-term care. It's all a wait-list situation, and this is a problem.

This morning, when I asked about what this government's plan is to address the problems under home care, I really didn't get satisfaction. Today, I'm here at the late show asking this government to put out a plan to tell us what they're going to do. If they need helpful hints, by all means, look up our platform.

Under the Conservative government, they also capped hours of care. That's a problem, because when you do an assessment and someone needs a certain amount of care, you can't say, "I'm so sorry, we are capping your hours of care. You're going to have to figure something out." You know what they end up doing? The family picks up the slack. We have that sandwich generation here now: You've got parents who might need home care, you're a full-time working person and you have children you're trying to support. That's not fair. Lifting the cap off home care hours is a good suggestion.

Also, increasing service hours so health care providers have more time to spend with each person who needs the care: That is extremely important. If you talk to a home care provider, a PSW, they will tell you that they can't perform their work duties for the person who's expecting their care to be delivered in that short time.

Then there's discontinuity of care. Sometimes you don't get the same home care PSW, and that's a problem for the person who's receiving the care because they've got to explain their whole care file over again. Even having that scheduling as an issue will help home care and patient care quality. That's something that the home care association also talked about: continuity of care and making sure that scheduling is actually working for the patient and the health care worker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, the member from Oakville North-Burlington, may reply or respond for up to five minutes.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I'm pleased to rise and to respond to the comments of the honourable member for London-Fanshawe about home care and the crisis that it is in today.

Let me first also thank all of the personal support workers and other staff who provide home care services to those in Ontario who need those services. As you indicated, the problem is acute, and the number of people who require these kinds of home services is growing as our population ages. Our government knows the hard work that home care providers provide, and we know that it's important that they dramatically improve the quality of life of so many people in Ontario, and certainly many seniors. I know the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care joins me in thanking all the home care workers for the work that you do and for your skills and dedication.

I was pleased to meet with representatives of Home Care Ontario earlier today. They told me about the good

work that their staff do and the differences that they make each and every day. I also agree with the member for London-Fanshawe. As she stated, they are truly on the front line of home care. They're offering us a lot of workable solutions to current home care problems and we were very pleased to meet with them today and to listen to many of the practical solutions that they proposed.

I'd also like to correct, though, some of the inaccuracies in the questions to the minister earlier today. The member referred to cuts in home care and a crisis in health care. I'd like to remind this House that the PC government has made no cuts in home care, and the crisis we face in health care today is really due to the past Liberal government's inaction.

We know that the Liberals neglected home and community care services, letting the gap between patient needs and available services grow wider and wider. We know that the Liberals left us with a shortage of personal support workers. The Premier and the Minister of Health have created a council of experts to advise them on tackling this tremendous challenge.

Our government knows that effective health care is not just based on the supply of money available, but on how you spend it. We will take the time to plan our spending so that we get it right so that we meet the health needs of people in Ontario.

On those health issues where the needs have been clearly identified, we have already taken action. I stood at the minister's side when she announced \$90 million of new money to secure 1,100 beds and spaces to ease gridlock in our hospitals as communities prepare for the flu season—a need identified that will be met. We are also moving forward, as you know, in building the 6,000 new long-term-care beds, with thousands of beds already allocated across Ontario—another identified need that we are meeting. And we will spend \$3.8 billion on mental health and addictions care for Ontario—another need we will meet.

The minister and the government have been very clear that we are going to meet the health care needs of Ontario, whether it's home care, hospitals or long-term care. But we will plan it appropriately. We will not follow the Liberal and NDP strategy of just throwing money at the problem. We will listen and we will do it right. And as we've found we needed to do in so many areas of government, we will clean up the spending, budgeting and planning in health care. We will provide the services in Ontario for people who need them, and I believe we will do it wisely.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank both members. There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. As a result, this House now stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1810.

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Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Tonia Grannum, Valerie Quioc Lim, William Short
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Arthur, Ian (NDP)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Baber, Roman (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Berns-McGown, Rima (NDP)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Calandra, Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Stan (PC)	Willowdale	
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Des Rosiers, Nathalie (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	
Downey, Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	
Dunlop, Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Hon. / L'hon. Christine (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Fee, Amy (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Parm (PC)	Milton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda (PC)	Cambridge	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Orléans	
Lecce, Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)	Ajax	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakubski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Wayne Gates
Stan Cho, Jill Dunlop
John Fraser, Wayne Gates
Stephen Lecce, Gila Martow
Jane McKenna, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Lindsey Park, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Timothy Bryan

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Stephen Crawford
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
Ian Arthur, Stan Cho
Stephen Crawford, Doug Downey
Sol Mamakwa, David Piccini
Jeremy Roberts, Sandy Shaw
Donna Skelly
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Timothy Bryan

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Dave Smith
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Jessica Bell, Lorne Coe
Chris Glover, Christine Hogarth
Logan Kanapathi, Daryl Kramp
Natalia Kusendova, Amarjot Sandhu
Mike Schreiner, Dave Smith
Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: John Vanthof
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Roman Baber, Rudy Cuzzetto
Amy Fee, Vincent Ke
Andrea Khanjin, Marie-France Lalonde
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Jeremy Roberts, Marit Stiles
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Parm Gill
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Roman Baber, Aris Babikian
Nathalie Des Rosiers, Jill Dunlop
Parm Gill, Lindsey Park
Ross Romano, Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria
Sara Singh, Monique Taylor
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Présidente: Jane McKenna
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam
Robert Bailey, Rima Berns-McGown
Michael Coteau, Mike Harris
Faisal Hassan, Jane McKenna
Christina Maria Mitas, Sam Oosterhoff
Amanda Simard, Gurratan Singh
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Présidente: Catherine Fife
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Peggy Sattler
Catherine Fife, Goldie Ghamari
Jim McDonnell, Norman Miller
Suze Morrison, Michael Parsa
Peggy Sattler, Kinga Surma
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Randy Hillier
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kaleed Rasheed
Toby Barrett, Will Bouma
Mike Harris, Randy Hillier
Mitzie Hunter, Laura Mae Lindo
Paul Miller, Billy Pang
Kaleed Rasheed, Amarjot Sandhu
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Présidente: Nina Tangri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Deepak Anand
Deepak Anand, Doly Begum
Jeff Burch, Amy Fee
Michael Gravelle, Joel Harden
Belinda Karahalios, Robin Martin
Sheref Sabawy, Nina Tangri
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Select Committee on Financial Transparency / Comité spécial
de la transparence financière**

Chair / Président: Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Doug Downey
Roman Baber, Doug Downey
Catherine Fife, Robin Martin
Lindsey Park, Ross Romano
Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria, Sandy Shaw
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim