

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 29

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N° 29

1st Session
42nd Parliament

Thursday
27 September 2018

1^{re} session
42^e législature

Jeudi
27 septembre 2018

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Todd Decker

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

<https://www.ola.org/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7400.

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7400.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

ISSN 1180-2987

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Thursday 27 September 2018 / Jeudi 27 septembre 2018

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Time allocation

Hon. Todd Smith.....	1259
Mr. John Vanthof.....	1259
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	1261
Mr. Dave Smith.....	1263
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	1266
Mr. Paul Calandra.....	1267
Debate deemed adjourned.....	1268

Wearing of ribbons

Mr. Bill Walker.....	1268
----------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo.....	1268
Mr. Norman Miller.....	1268
Mr. Sol Mamakwa.....	1268
Mr. Stephen Crawford.....	1268
Mr. Roman Baber.....	1268
Mr. Paul Calandra.....	1268
Mrs. Robin Martin.....	1268
Hon. Jeff Yurek.....	1268
Mr. David Piccini.....	1268
Mr. Norman Miller.....	1269

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Government's agenda

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	1269
Hon. Doug Ford.....	1269

Employment standards

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	1270
Hon. Doug Ford.....	1270

Anti-racism activities

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	1270
Hon. Doug Ford.....	1270

College funding

Mr. Stephen Lecce.....	1271
Hon. Merrilee Fullerton.....	1271

Long-term care

Mr. Joel Harden.....	1272
Hon. Christine Elliott.....	1272

Injured workers

Ms. Donna Skelly.....	1272
Hon. Laurie Scott.....	1272

Education funding

Ms. Marit Stiles.....	1273
Hon. Lisa M. Thompson.....	1273

Anti-racism activities

Mr. John Fraser.....	1273
Hon. Doug Ford.....	1273

Red tape reduction

Mr. Dave Smith.....	1274
Hon. Jim Wilson.....	1274

Indigenous economic development

Mr. Sol Mamakwa.....	1275
Hon. Jeff Yurek.....	1275

Concussions

Ms. Lindsey Park.....	1275
Hon. Sylvia Jones.....	1276

Addiction services

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche.....	1276
Hon. Christine Elliott.....	1276

Forest industry

Mr. Ross Romano.....	1276
Hon. Jeff Yurek.....	1277

Addiction services

Mr. Terence Kernaghan.....	1277
Hon. Christine Elliott.....	1277

Community safety

Mr. David Piccini.....	1278
Hon. Michael A. Tibollo.....	1278
Hon. Ernie Hardeman.....	1278

Public transit

Ms. Jessica Bell.....	1279
Hon. Doug Ford.....	1279

Childhood Cancer Awareness Month

Mr. Bill Walker.....	1279
----------------------	------

Visitor

Mr. Mike Schreiner.....	1279
-------------------------	------

Notice of dissatisfaction

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott).....	1279
------------------------------------	------

Visitor

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott).....	1279
------------------------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff.....	1279
Mrs. Nina Tangri.....	1279
Mr. Bill Walker.....	1279

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS /
DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS**

Injured workers	
Ms. Jessica Bell.....	1280
Rail safety	
Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos	1280
Correctional facilities	
Mr. Wayne Gates	1280
Childhood cancer	
Mr. Bill Walker	1280
Heron Gate	
Mr. Joel Harden.....	1281
Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center	
Mr. Roman Baber.....	1281
Gun violence	
Mr. Chris Glover	1281
Norfolk County Fair and Horse Show	
Mr. Toby Barrett	1282
International trade	
Mrs. Daisy Wai	1282

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS /
DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI**

Cannabis Statute Law Amendment Act, 2018, Bill 36, Ms. Mulroney / Loi de 2018 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne le cannabis, projet de loi 36, Mme Mulroney	
First reading agreed to.....	1282
Hon. Caroline Mulroney	1282
Crystal-Kirkland Mines, Limited Act, 2018, Bill Pr1, Mr. Vanthof	
First reading agreed to.....	1282

**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS
MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES**

Gender Equality Week	
Hon. Lisa MacLeod.....	1282
Ms. Suze Morrison.....	1284

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

School facilities	
Mr. Faisal Hassan.....	1284
Employment standards	
Ms. Bhutla Karpoche	1285
Injured workers	
Mr. Tom Rakocevic	1285
Animal protection	
Ms. Christine Hogarth.....	1285

Affordable housing	
Mr. Wayne Gates	1285
Indigenous affairs	
Ms. Bhutla Karpoche	1286
Injured workers	
Ms. Bhutla Karpoche	1286
Celiac disease	
Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens	1286
Curriculum	
Ms. Bhutla Karpoche	1286
Curriculum	
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	1287
Pharmacare	
Mr. Jeff Burch.....	1287
Special report, Auditor General	
The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky)	1287
Report, Ombudsman of Ontario	
The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky)	1287

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS /
AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC
ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉS**

Alternate Land Use and Services Program for Agricultural Land Act, 2018, Bill 28, Mr. Barrett / Loi de 2018 sur un programme de diversification des modes d'utilisation des terres agricoles et des services produits sur ces terres, projet de loi 28, M. Barrett	
Mr. Toby Barrett	1287
Mr. John Vanthof	1289
Ms. Andrea Khanjin	1291
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	1291
Mr. Mike Schreiner	1292
Hon. Sylvia Jones	1293
Mr. Toby Barrett	1293
GO Transit	
Mr. Jeff Burch.....	1293
Mr. Sam Oosterhoff.....	1295
Mr. Wayne Gates	1296
Ms. Donna Skelly	1297
Ms. Jessica Bell.....	1297
Ms. Christine Hogarth	1298
Mr. Jeff Burch	1299
Affordable housing	
Ms. Suze Morrison	1299
Hon. Steve Clark	1301
Ms. Rima Berns-McGown	1302
Ms. Christine Hogarth	1302
Ms. Bhutla Karpoche.....	1303
Miss Christina Maria Mitas	1303
Mr. Peter Tabuns	1304
Ms. Suze Morrison	1304

**Alternate Land Use and Services Program for
Agricultural Land Act, 2018, Bill 28, Mr. Barrett /
Loi de 2018 sur un programme de diversification
des modes d'utilisation des terres agricoles et des
services produits sur ces terres, projet de loi 28,
M. Barrett**

Second reading agreed to..... 1305

GO Transit

Motion agreed to..... 1305

Affordable housing

Motion agreed to..... 1305

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Time allocation

Mr. Paul Calandra..... 1305

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy..... 1305

Vote deferred 1310

Time allocation

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy..... 1310

Mr. Dave Smith 1311

Debate deemed adjourned..... 1318

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 27 September 2018

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 27 septembre 2018

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We will have a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

The House observed a moment's silence.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Todd Smith: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House, when the order of the day is called resuming the adjourned debate on government order number 6, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the motion and any amendments thereto, which questions shall be decided without further amendment or debate; and

That, notwithstanding standing order 9(c) or 28(h), there shall be no deferral of any vote; and

That, in the case of any division on the amendment to the motion and the motion, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Smith, Bay of Quinte, has moved government notice of motion number 8. Would the minister care to lead off the debate? No?

Further debate? The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming–Cochrane and today also on behalf—as always, hopefully—of the members of my caucus and our leader, Andrea Horwath.

Today we're discussing another time allocation motion. It came to me this morning, as I found out that we were to discuss a time allocation motion, that since this new government has been elected they haven't been able to figure out how to move legislation without time allocation. They talk a good game about wanting to work together and then, each time, with very little notice, they have decided to go around the system and use—it is a tool at their disposal. But it's further evidence again, and this won't be the first time that I've tried to warn the government—because at the end of the day, although we are in opposition as legislators, each time that time allocation is used, it hurts the way this Legislature works. This one is a bit different, and I will get into that in a few moments.

Legislation needs to be debated. It needs to go to committee. Not because it's just a way to waste time; it's a way to get more people to look at it, more people to criticize it and, in the end, make it better legislation. Because at the end of the day, at the end of your mandate, of this current mandate, at the end of your personal mandates and your personal political careers—and we will all have an end to our personal political careers—you want to be looked upon—at least, I hope that I'm looked upon as a reasonable person who did everything I could to make our system work, despite whoever's in government.

Continually using time allocation, bill after bill after bill, and in this case on this motion, quite frankly, doesn't look reasonable. But a bigger problem is that the issues you miss by not adequately vetting the legislation are going to come up and bite you, and they're going to bite you big time. Bigger, maybe, than any of us know, because one of the issues why you would like to create this select committee—and we will talk about that in a second—is because of some of the issues that bit the last government big time.

You're not taking, from what we can see, any precautions. You haven't learned from their actual procedural mistakes and their legislative mistakes. You haven't learned. Although your beliefs may be different, the problems you face could very well be the same thing.

Usually in the past when I've spoken to time allocation motions, I like to quote the now Minister of Transportation about the guillotine.

Ms. Catherine Fife: You could actually quote all of them.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, I could. I could. But this one is a bit different. Their argument on the other side is going to be, “Well, we're not trying to move legislation. We're trying to create a committee.” So, it's a bit different. The member from Waterloo made a very good point yesterday that—

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm sure I did.

Mr. John Vanthof: She makes very good points.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm being heckled by my own members now.

But she made a very good point: Many, if not all of the things that you want to find out with this select committee could be done, should be done, at public accounts. The way your motion is structured, the Auditor General is there. Actually, that is where the issues that you focused on were identified as well, with the Auditor General.

The Auditor General identified the issues with the fair hydro plan. She identified the issues with the pension plan. It raises a question. We understand the issue about the

money being, perhaps, put in the wrong places. We understand that. Not “perhaps”; it was. We identified that as well. But this committee doesn’t seem to be looking for new information, it doesn’t seem to be looking for information that we don’t already have, and it certainly doesn’t seem, as the motion is presented, to be looking for solutions.

Usually, a select committee is non-partisan. You identify a problem and you know what? The Legislature sits down, says: “Let’s appoint people. Yes, we will find out a problem, and then we will look for a solution. So, either we fix the problem or it doesn’t happen again.” We don’t see that in this motion, in the committee motion itself. We don’t see that. What we perceive—and it’s not up to me, it’s not my job and not my responsibility, nor do I want to guess what the government sees, but when I look at your motion, again, you’re looking more at using this committee as perhaps a weapon instead of a tool.

0910

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: A political weapon.

Mr. John Vanthof: A political weapon. The weapon has already been used by the people of Ontario against the previous government.

The information that this committee is seeking—and we’re not trying to belittle the information. They are incredibly big numbers, and the Auditor General, in our opinion, was right in saying the accounting was not correct. But we don’t see anything in the motion that would direct the committee to actually say, “And here’s what we’re going to do in the future to make sure that doesn’t happen.” That’s what’s missing.

One of our amendments: We would urge the government to consider, really consider, that if you’re really going to want to use this committee as a tool to make our system better on behalf of the people of Ontario, all the people of Ontario, the people who voted for you, the people who voted for us and the people quite frankly who didn’t vote but whom we still have to look out for—we do. If the committee was structured so there were actually ways that the committee suggests it could look forward, that would make a big difference. But we really don’t see that.

That’s why we’ve put forward, Speaker, these two amendments, to actually—I apologize, Speaker. This is the first time I’ve looked at you. You’re a great Speaker. I’m trying to be measured, so I’m sure that’s why you haven’t directed me to.

But these two amendments we’ve put forward are to try and make this committee a tool, a tool that presently legislators don’t have, because if we’re just looking for the numbers and we’re just looking for the where, why and how, the public accounts committee is perfectly equipped to do that right now. The Auditor General’s office is very, very well equipped to do that right now. We don’t need that. If this is just to find out what happened, that already exists—that already exists. If this is just to be used as a political weapon on behalf of the government for political theatre or basically to continue to grind other people into the ground—quite frankly, if this government is all about

effective use of taxpayers’ money, that is a total waste of taxpayers’ money.

If this committee is to be used as—for once in my life I need speaking notes, and they’re not there. But if this committee is truly to be used as a tool to improve the way the Legislature works for the people of the province, we urge the government to seriously, seriously consider voting for the amendments that we have proposed, both to broaden the scope of the committee, to look at not one slice of government, one period, but also to look at functions of government—functions of governments. So, to look forward and to look back, because one of the big problems I found in my seven years here—seven, eight years; time flies even if you’re not having fun—is that often decisions are made with a very narrow window. And after decisions are made, people who made the decisions: “Oh, who knew that was going to happen?” Well, we could have thought about that if you had taken some time to actually figure that out. This committee could do that if you broadened the scope and said, “Let’s look at government decisions. Yes, the Liberal government in the past made lots of bad decisions, and let’s look at them. But let’s look at government decisions in general and see how they’re made and see where they can be improved.”

Ms. Catherine Fife: All the way back to the 407.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, yes, we could go all the way back to the 407.

Another issue we have identified is that, the way the committee is structured, witnesses can be called before the committee. That’s a good thing. But effectively, the way it’s structured, witnesses will only be approved if the government approves of the witness. If you really want this committee to work and you want to use this committee as a tool as opposed to a weapon, a political weapon; if you want to use it as a legislative tool to improve the lives of Ontarians, which, really, is what a select committee is for; if you look at the Select Committee on Developmental Services and the Select Committee on—

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: —Mental Health and Addictions.

Mr. John Vanthof: —Mental health and Addictions, those were select committees to improve the lives of Ontarians. If you want to make the select committee on—whatever this one’s called—government transparency, if you want to make it really work as a tool as opposed to a political weapon, you would open it up to allow all of the committee members to call witnesses. And yes, you’re going to get some viewpoints that the governing party is not going to like—you are. But at the end, you’re going to get a much more balanced report from the committee. As legislators, I would believe that you would want a select committee to have a much more balanced approach and balanced recommendations.

There’s not going to be any shortage of political opinion in this place. That’s a given. But if you’re going to create a select committee, let’s make it a legislative opinion, an opinion of this Legislature. That’s what a select committee should be. That’s why we are going to move an amendment to this time allocation motion.

I move that the motion be amended as follows:

In the first paragraph, the words “there shall be one hour of additional debate with 30 minutes apportioned to the government, 20 minutes to the official opposition, seven minutes to the independent Liberal Party members and three minutes to the independent Green Party member. At the end of this time” shall be inserted following the number “6”; and

In the second paragraph, delete the words “9(c) or”.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Mr. Vanthof moved that the motion be amended as follows:

In the first paragraph the words “there shall be one hour of additional debate with 30 minutes apportioned to the government, 20 minutes to the official opposition, seven minutes to the independent Liberal Party members and three minutes to the independent Green Party member. At the end of this time,” shall be inserted following the number “6”; and

In the second paragraph, delete the words “9(c) or”.

I give the floor back to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: I would like to share my time with the member from—can I do that? Okay.

In closing, the reason for this motion is to give the government a little bit more time to actually consider what we’re trying to do with these amendments that we’ve previously proposed to your motion. We are trying to make this committee work as a tool for the Legislature, not as a political weapon.

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

0920

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I’m standing for the further debate on the amendment that was just read because I didn’t see a Conservative rise to speak to the amendment, so I’m going to take some time to do that because I think the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane truly presented a very thoughtful amendment. When we are talking about setting up an all-party select committee in this Legislature, there should be voices from all representations in the House. What kind of government thinks that their opinion is the only one that the people of Ontario need to hear?

We are the official opposition, and we are here to explain to you, or deliver our message, about how important it is that you respect the other voices in this Legislature who voted for us to be here. If you have an all-party select committee with one of the terms, that I believe were referenced, that the government is the only one that approves the witnesses that come forward, how ridiculous does that sound to people? They don’t allow anyone—it’s like the Toronto legislation: They didn’t allow anyone to speak to it that it impacted. The people of Toronto had a right to let you know what they felt was the number of people that they needed to represent them and bring their issues forward.

Now we’re seeing the same style of forced legislation, forced decisions, on the people. You have a select committee that they want to get to the bottom of the accounting issues that the Liberals had. We all agreed at the time, when the Conservatives were sitting on this side of the

House, that there were problems with the financial language, that there were problems with the financial paperwork and the way they interpreted things. And I have to tell you: They use the same language.

When the Liberals ran in 2014 and talked about optimizing and modernization of hydro, not a word, never a word, mentioned sell-off. Not a word—privatization or sell-off. Then when they got the power of a majority government, they came to this Legislature and they sold off hydro. We tried to stop them. The Conservatives talked a good game, but they are continuing with the privatization. They were quite vocal about how terrible it was, but now they have the wherewithal to do something about it, and they chose to sit there and not do anything but carry on that philosophy, because they inherently love privatization. The 407 is a perfectly good example. People despise that decision, but once you privatize, you can’t go back.

When I compare that 2014 election, I look at the platform that the Conservatives put forward. The big overview title was “efficient government.” But not once did they talk about changing the Municipal Act in Toronto—not once. And if they did, would the people of Toronto and maybe the people of Ontario have understood whether or not they wanted that to happen?

So you have the privatization and modernization of hydro and you have efficient government under the Conservatives, and nobody tells you what that means until they come to this Legislature and have power. But then they take that power, they take that authority that they were given by the people, and they continue doing that by setting up this select committee on the finance piece and then time-allocating it. When they do that, they even are putting it in a committee where really it doesn’t belong. They’re kind of pushing the Auditor General off to the side. They should be respecting the Auditor General. We know that the Liberals didn’t; they went outside of her authority and they got independent auditors to make the numbers work the way they liked them.

Now this government, the Conservatives, have an opportunity. If this is what they really want to do—to get some transparency and accountability so that this doesn’t happen again to another government—then you need to put it in the right committee, and that’s public accounts, where the Auditor General, who is an expert—I know the Premier loves to talk about consulting with experts. Now he has the opportunity to do so, and he skirts them.

You know, Speaker, it doesn’t really resonate well with people of Ontario when you’re setting up this committee. We know that during the election the people spoke. They discarded the Liberals for their antics. Everyone knew that the books weren’t correct, that the numbers that they were reporting weren’t accurate. The Auditor General told us that. Now you’re going to a committee to rehash it. So, if we’re going to do that, make sure you’re planning and setting in progress—not just for the Liberals, to catch them and what they did, because, I mean, the Auditor General did that. She did that. She did that on the fair hydro plan. She did that on the pension plan. So you want to rehash that.

The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane said it truly is a political weapon. The election is over. You need to focus on what people want to see happen, what changes they need in their lives. Get on with it. If you do—obviously, you have the power to carry on and have this committee go forward—then please, make it sound like you care about the people of Ontario and it's not just a political agenda for Premier Ford to continue on this rampage, like he did with the Toronto legislation.

Stop helping him do that kind of style of government. No one really appreciates it. People in my riding talk to me all the time about the way you treat legislation in this Legislature, because you're not allowing other members of this Legislature to contribute to it. It has been documented and recorded with all the bills that you've passed, there have been no committees, no consultation, no public input. Then, you want to just be the only deciding factor who speaks to you. Does that make any sense?

You need both sides of the story. Whether you agree with the outcome, the mature and adult way to deal with an issue is to get both sides of the story and then, sometimes, self-reflect on yourself and how you contributed to that, because you were also the official opposition on this side of the House, and you didn't stand up to stop the sale of Hydro One.

I really think that there are many things we could be really putting in front of the agenda of this government to change people's lives for the better. I'm the critic for long-term care and home care. Most recently, the public inquiry with the horrendous murders that happened, one in London, and then the others in Woodstock—that public inquiry has been in process for quite some time. You know what? You hear from everyone, so that when it comes time to make those decisions, conclude that report and your recommendations, you have all the information. Because if you don't do that in the select committee that you're proposing, you're opening up governments for further mistakes, because your only motivation here for this committee is to catch the Liberals, is to show how they changed the books and how creative they were with their accounting.

It's been done. It's been done. The people spoke about it. There was a referendum during the election. It's been done. They said: "No thank you, no thanks to that style of government. We don't believe Liberals can continue to govern this province for the people of Ontario."

You're not just the government for the people. Please, get over yourself from that slogan. We are all here for everyone, for all the people. We are here for the people who voted for us. We are here for the people who voted for you. We are here for the people who didn't vote, as the member for Timiskaming pointed out; when they come to your constituency office, I hope that you're not just serving the people who voted for you, because your role is to serve everyone. We are all here for everyone.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Exactly. That's a good reminder.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes. To constantly think you're the only government and you have a plaque on each of your desks that you're "for the people": Really, again,

you're not understanding your role as a member of Parliament, of people who you represent. You have to respect the members that you work with so that you can work together for everyone, for all the people of Ontario, to make sure their lives do change for the better, because we know that change just for the sake of change so far is not working so good for everyone.

0930

I have people coming up to me and saying, "You know, Teresa, when you get to that Legislature, I want you to hammer that government." But hammering someone—you're not going to listen. But that's your style. You are hammering Toronto with your legislation. You are setting up a committee to catch the Liberals, to punish the Liberals, to use a political weapon. That's not going to work. In the long run, it isn't going to work. It's short-term gratification for the Premier, but it's not actually making changes in the financial protocol of this Legislature when a government is in power to help us in the future for everyone, including yourselves, because your focus is on making the Liberals look bad. You know, they look pretty bad now, and they had been looking pretty bad for many years before this election. People have told us that, and that's why we have this composition, the way the government is now.

I'm going to just basically wrap my time up on the amendment that we have proposed to the time allocation. Again, it talks about allowing people who have been elected to this Legislature to have input. That's what should be the composition of a committee: to allow the people who are sitting here, because people voted for them, input on a topic that apparently is so paramount to this government, the Conservative government, that they put this priority ahead of people in the riding of—Sol, what's your riding?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Kiiwetinoong.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Kiiwetinoong—the passionate, compassionate, moving question that we had last week where a young woman, a young girl, died by suicide; where we have people waiting at home in crisis for long-term care or in an alternative care bed in the hospital for months, waiting for a long-term-care bed; where we have an opioid crisis where people are dying. People are dying; no one is making that up here. People are dying. Read the paper. Yet your first priority in an all-party select committee is to look at the creative financial accounting that the Liberals brought forward in this Legislature. The Auditor General already told you that. The people of Ontario already spoke and said, "That's not the kind of government we want." So be the bigger government and actually meet their expectations.

Speaker, I'm going to end my time for the debate right now, but I'm sure someone else would like to contribute to the amendment, as we need to, because hopefully we can talk some sense into these members and they can talk some sense into this Premier and make him understand how to treat other people when it comes to a working relationship.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Smith: I got into politics for one reason and one reason only: I was tired of seeing things being done that were costing people in our province a lot of money. We had the opportunity to stand up and make a difference. You can sit on your couch and complain—that does nothing—or you can stand up and do something. This is a government that is standing up and trying to do something, but our NDP opposition essentially is sitting on the couch complaining that we're trying to do something.

We know that those who don't learn from history are destined to repeat it. So we're asking to have a select committee to review what has happened historically with the money, the money that has been wasted. We need to learn from that. We need to take the opportunity to make sure that we don't repeat those mistakes; that as a government, we stand up and we do what's right for the people. We know that they've been under a tax burden for a long period of time. For the last 15 years, life has gotten significantly harder for people. We know that had the last Liberal government kept spending to the same level as Ontario's population growth, it would have saved \$331 billion. If they had done that, just that one little bit of restraint, and kept spending at what our actual growth is, we wouldn't be facing a \$338-billion debt. We'd be looking at a very, very manageable amount of money that Ontario owes. We would have, this year alone, \$12.6 billion more that we could be putting into very important things like our social safety network. We could be putting that into health care. We can always add more money to health care. It's something that Ontario can never spend enough on. But we're limited in our resources because of foolish decisions that have been made in the past.

I'm not sure I understand why the NDP do not want to get this to committee, why they do not want us to find out exactly where that money went and why it was spent foolishly. Instead, they want us to be in here debating why we should find out what happened to that money. The opinion of the Legislature is something that my good friend from the NDP referred to earlier. It's not just the opinion of the Legislature, though, that's important here; it's the opinion of the people. We want to bring people into that committee to tell us how they suffered, what went on, where that money got wasted, so that we can learn from that, so that we don't make those same mistakes.

The amendment they've put forward, to most people, is going to sound reasonable: "We want an hour of additional debate added onto it." But every time you add to the debate here, every time you add something more onto it, you're adding to the length of time it takes to find out what went wrong. There isn't anything that they're going to be able to say here that is going to be more important than the people who are coming to the committee to give us those opinions, to tell us how they suffered through it, to tell us what went wrong. That's what we need to find out.

Marcus Tullius Cicero once said, "What then is freedom? The power to live as one wishes." But what we have found over the last 15 years is, that's not the case in Ontario. In Ontario, we have been overburdened by taxes because there has been wasteful spending—significant

wasteful spending. Billions and billions of dollars have left this province, have left our government with no accountability for where it was being spent. And that's wrong.

We are accountable to the people. History will look back at us. History looks back at all of the governments, and they judge us on what we have done. We need to stand up for the people of this province. We need to find out exactly how the money was mismanaged. We need to know all of the mistakes that were made so that we don't repeat those mistakes. It's incumbent upon us, as the people in the Legislature, to remember that it is about the people of Ontario, and it's only about the people of Ontario. Everything that we need to be in their best interest, and that's what we have been trying to do. We want to make sure that we don't repeat those mistakes, because we can't repeat those mistakes.

The average person in Ontario is suffering because of the mistakes that have been made. They reach into their pocket and there's less there. There's less there because this government of Ontario, over the last 15 years, has taken more and more from them, and they decided that they were going to spend it. Not only did they take more out of our pockets, but they borrowed more, and they spent that. The only one who received any gain from it when they borrowed that extra money were the bondholders, those who were getting paid the interest, those who were making money off the backs of the Ontario taxpayer, and that's not right.

0940

You do something because it is the right thing to do, not because you want adulation for it, not because you want praise for it, not because you want to gain more votes. The Ontario government is not here to sell itself to get more votes. The Ontario government is here to serve the people of Ontario, and to serve the people of Ontario in a way that allows them freedom, the power to live as they wish. That has been taken away from them over the last 15 years. We cannot forget that. Most people in Ontario are not able to have the life that they want to live because they're overburdened. We need to change that.

I ask the NDP, I ask our opposition: Work with us on this. Please. Help us get to the bottom of how that money was wasted. Help us so that we can all learn from those mistakes, so that we don't repeat those mistakes. We can't go through that again. We cannot further burden the people of this great province. Life has gotten harder in Ontario, and it shouldn't be.

I'm a father. I want my children to have the opportunities that I had. I've lived through a couple of recessions and yet I've had a good quality of life. I want my children and my grandchildren to have that quality of life. They can't when they're overburdened by the debt load we have—38% is what our debt ratio is to GDP. If we were going into a bank looking to buy a home and that was our debt ratio, we wouldn't be able to get a mortgage because the bank would look at us and say: "You can't afford it." We're reaching that breaking point in Ontario. Our debt burden is so high, we're taking away the freedom of the people of Ontario. We're taking away the power to live as they wish.

Marcus Tullius Cicero lived more than 2,000 years ago, and he knew that. He said those things. We need to learn from that history. Yes, he was a Roman. Yes, he didn't live in Canada. Canada didn't exist at that point, but he was a great man who had vision and understood.

He also made a statement that gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but it's the parent of all other virtues. We need to be grateful to the people of Ontario. We know that they have put us in this position so that we can make wise decisions on their behalf, so that we can make their lives easier. That's the gratitude we should be showing to them. It shouldn't be that we need to stand in here and talk more and more and more about something that all of us know needs to be done.

We need to get to work, and that's what the Doug Ford government is doing. We are getting to work. We want to know everything that went wrong. We want to know how that money was wasted. We want to make sure that we don't make those same mistakes, because the people of Ontario cannot afford those mistakes. We don't have the luxury of borrowing more on the backs of our grandchildren or our great-grandchildren. That's not fair and reasonable to them.

The government's job—the government's only job—is to serve the people of Ontario, and that's what we need to do. We need to do it in a responsible and respectful manner. I ask the opposition once again: Please take the time to work with us because you know in your hearts that it is correct, that we have to find out exactly where that money was wasted. We have to.

We're going to work forward with it. There are all kinds of things that have come forward on this. What we know definitively—I'm going to take a quote from the President of the Treasury Board: "We all know that diet fads don't work. By the same measure, reaching at short-term, cost-cutting measures is not a long-term answer to addressing structural challenges facing our province."

We need to make sure that what we're doing is in the long-term best interests of this province. We can't be in a position where Ontario is going to have to cut something because we no longer have any money. We need to make sure that we are financially sustainable. We need to make sure that those who need the support get the support, from today, moving forward. We can never be in a position where the people of Ontario cannot depend on their government to do what's right for them. The only way we're going to have that financial ability is to look back at how the money was wasted, to know where that money was misspent, so that we don't make that same mistake.

I said it earlier and I'll say it again: Those who don't learn from history are destined to repeat it. We need to know: What was the history? How was that money mismanaged? Where did it go? How can we make sure that we don't do those same things? The only way that we can make sure that we don't make those same mistakes is to look back at what those mistakes were, to find out exactly where those gaps were. We need to find out exactly what the needs are of this province. If we don't do the proper needs analysis and the gap analysis, we're going to be

making those same mistakes. We're going to be putting money in places that we don't need it.

A program that is a fabulous program that is underfunded and doesn't serve its needs is a waste of money. Likewise, a program that may do good work but is overfunded and has significant waste is also a waste of money. We need to find out exactly where all of that money was spent to make sure that we're not overfunding something and spending too much on it and not receiving any result from it. We need to make sure that we're not underfunding something that could be doing great work for the people of Ontario.

What we know more than anything else is that with a \$338-billion debt load, \$12.6 billion wasted in interest alone that could have been spent on more appropriate things in this province, it means that there will be things that there are shortfalls for, and we cannot have that. We must make sure that the people of Ontario are being served properly, that the people of Ontario get to live their lives the way they want to, the way they deserve to. We know right now that there are a number of people in this province that that's not the case. We are the government for the people, for all of the people of Ontario, and we need to make sure that we have the money to look after every person in this great province.

I get passionate about these things because I truly believe it. I believe that we're here for one purpose, and that purpose is to serve the people of this province. If we're not serving the people of this province appropriately, then why are we here? We're not here to take their money from them and waste it or spend it foolishly. We're here because we are looking after our brothers and sisters. We're here because we want to make sure that the life for our children, our grandchildren and their children is going to be better. We want to move this province forward in a way that we know is going to make it a better province.

We've said repeatedly that we are open for business. Ontario is open for business, and we will remain open for business. But what we can't have is a taxation system that takes away that competitiveness. We can't have a taxation system that puts an undue burden on the people who live in this province. The only way we can make sure that we're not putting that burden on them is to know how the money has been wasted. We have to get back to a point where we're accounting for every single dollar that comes in.

It's not our money—none of us in this chamber. It is not our money. It's the people of Ontario's, and they're entrusting us to look after it appropriately. The way to look after it appropriately is to find out how it has been misused, to make sure that we're not misusing it, to make sure that we're not plugging a hole that doesn't exist, to make sure that we're not leaving a gaping hole that needs to be fixed.

0950

At the moment, money is leaving this province at a rapid rate—\$12.6 billion this year alone will go to someone's pocket to pad it through interest. We cannot continue to borrow money that way. We need to get back to a balanced budget. We need to make sure that the people of

Ontario are getting the services they deserve. We cannot do that if we don't have financial transparency. We cannot do that if we continue down the path that we've gone down in the past. That's not how we do things appropriately.

We have to look at how every dollar has been spent. Was it misspent? We have to know: Who made those decisions to misspend that money and why did they make that decision? Was the decision politically motivated? Was the decision being made because it was in the best interests of the people, or was the decision being made because it was padding someone's pocket? Those are the questions that need to be answered.

We're asking to strike a select committee on this. We want to bring together some great minds. We have some exceptional MPPs who have been proposed for this committee—very, very bright people on both sides. The NDP are presenting some very, very capable people. We are presenting some very capable people. These people are the ones who are going to get that information for us. They're going to have the witnesses come in. They're going to be able to ask for documents from the previous government. They're going to be able to do the investigation. If we don't do that investigation, we're doing a disservice to the people of this province.

I'm not sure why—I've said it earlier, but I'll repeat it—the NDP want to debate more. Why do we want to talk more on why we should or shouldn't be asking the questions? Why do we want to have another hour dedicated to saying, "We're not 100% sure yet that it's the right idea to find out how money was wasted"?

We need to get to work. We need to prove to the people of Ontario that we are conscious that it is their money. It is their money. The government of Ontario does not make money. The government takes money from the people and redistributes it, and we need to redistribute it in a way that is appropriate.

We know, definitively, there was a deficit this past year of more than \$15 billion. We were told by the Liberals that that was not going to be the case, that it was going to be just a little deficit of \$6 billion. The Auditor General took a look at it and said, "No, we believe it's going to be more." Then, we did the independent study, and we found it was greater than that. There was a larger amount of waste, a huge amount of waste that was hidden not only from the Auditor General but from us and the people of Ontario. It's their money. It is completely inappropriate for us not to find out how and why their money was wasted.

We need to get to work. Obstructing it, making it harder to find out how the money was being wasted—I don't truly understand it. We've said in the past that the NDP propped up the Liberal government 97% of the time. Are they asking for a delay? Why are they asking for a delay?

What we need to find out is exactly why that money is being wasted, but there's a delay that's being requested for it. How is that serving the people of Ontario? How is that serving our constituents? Why can't we go out and find out how that money was spent, how that money was wasted, where did it go? Who made those decisions? We

can't right now because a group in this Legislature is saying, "Let's hold off. Let's delay it. We need to think about this more before we start asking questions. We need to hold off. We need to make sure that we don't get to work."

The loyal opposition's role is to hold us accountable, which we agree to 100%. That's the system we have. They need to hold the government accountable, but they need to hold the government accountable in a reasonable way, in a measured way. Holding the government accountable for spending, and wasteful spending, is key to their job. They need to be part of the select committee. They need to get down to work with us. They need to work with us so that we can find out how that money was wasted and why that money was wasted.

Excuse me. I'm coming down with a cold. I'm sick. I'm sick because of the amount of money that has been wasted; it's making me sick. Excuse me, Madam Speaker.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Are you okay there?

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm okay.

They're looking for an additional hour of debate. They're going to give 30 minutes of that debate to us, they're going to take 20 minutes for themselves and then divide up between the Greens and the Liberals an additional 10. They're giving 5% of the representation here about 12% of what's being said. What we know, though, is that those decisions were made by the Liberals. I'm not sure why they want the Liberals to weigh in more and add more delay to it. They propped them up 97% of the time.

Ms. Catherine Fife: No, you can't prop up a majority government. You know that.

Mr. Dave Smith: Whenever something was put forward by the Liberals in the past, 97% of the time the NDP agreed to it. That is propping them up.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Order. Stop the clock.

If we could cut back on the chatter going across the room, I would be able to hear the person who has the floor. Thank you.

Start the clock.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I come back to my point, though: We have a select committee that is being put together. The committee's job is to make sure that we know exactly how the money has been spent. We need to make sure that that \$15-billion deficit doesn't repeat itself. We need to make sure that the \$338 billion that Ontario owes gets reduced. We need to find out where that money was wasted so that we can move forward. We are setting up that select committee for it. We're going to make sure that we don't have these issues moving forward.

Madam Speaker, I'm going to wrap up what I'm going to say and pass it over to my colleague—sorry, I have to look where he's from—from Markham–Stouffville. I'm going to share my time with him on this.

As I said earlier at the very beginning, we can sit on our couch and complain, or we can stand up and do something to make a difference. There's a sports analogy: Pain goes

away; glory lasts forever. The reason we do these things— it may be painful for us at times, but we have to do it because it is for the betterment of Ontario so that Ontario can move forward, so that the people of this province get the glory that they deserve, so that the people of this province can live the lives that we all know they deserve.

I'll come back to it one more time because my colleagues don't seem to like Marcus Tullius Cicero: "What then is freedom? The power to live as one wishes." We need to make sure that we know how that money was wasted so that the people of Ontario can live as they wish.

With that, Madam Speaker, I'm going to turn it over to my colleague from Markham–Stouffville.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to join the debate this morning.

I have to tell you, Cicero is turning around in his grave. If he thought that anybody would be using him to quote time allocation, which is limiting debate—it is compromising our democracy.

1000

Democracies can be messy, but it's something that we fought to have here in this country and in this province. Honestly, time allocation—which this government has been using constantly—is the hammer that a government uses. I can't even recognize some of the former members that we served with for six years, because they were dead set against time allocation. John Yakabuski used to sit here, and I have so many quotes from that member from Renfrew, because he said that using time allocation is an abuse of power. It is in the Hansard.

What we have proposed, our amendment, is incredibly reasonable. I want to let you know why we have proposed this amendment, the one hour that will break the democratic process here in the provincial Legislature. We have proposed two amendments to the select committee, because we, unlike the member from Peterborough has, sort of, referenced—

Mr. Dave Smith: Peterborough–Kawartha.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Peterborough–Kawartha; thank you very much. We have proposed two amendments to actually make the select committee stronger, which is an important part of the official opposition. It is our job to do so.

The first amendment that came directly is, really, to allow any member of the committee to call witnesses. That's an important process. If you want to get to the truth, open the door and invite the people into the process. But the government has said no; they're going to limit our ability to do this. That isn't a government for the people; that is a government that is all about control. They have used these mechanisms and these tools to control this process.

The second amendment, which is incredibly valuable, was to take a broader view, to look at how the new government is dealing with the deficit now. This is the part of the process that the select committee could look at to apply new learning to how we actually spend money, how

we establish contracts, because the Liberals did a lot of privatization, they did a lot of contracting out, and there was very little accountability to that process.

One quick example: They kept giving the same highway maintenance company contracts for six years, even though those companies were found to not be doing any basic due diligence, they weren't performing to the terms of the contract, and they actually owed the government \$49 million in fines. The government was giving a company fines for not performing the work, and then they were still giving them the contracts.

But you know where this information is? It's right there in the Auditor General's report, because the Auditor General is the independent officer of this Legislature. So, she will not be looking at these issues through the lens of being a New Democrat or being a Progressive Conservative. She has taken an oath to be independent and to establish the fact that public money has no party. That's the important part of this process, this select committee.

The select committee, as the government has engaged in—I just want to be really clear with the government side of the House. Everybody already sees that this is theatre, because we actually have a public accounts committee which has the same makeup of the select committee. We have six PC members on that committee. I'm the Chair of the public accounts committee. Our job is to do exactly what the select committee has been charged to do.

There are six PC members and there are three New Democrats. They're good people. They're the members from Richmond Hill, Carleton, Etobicoke Centre, Parry Sound–Muskoka, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and Aurora. Then we have two members from the NDP, in addition to myself from Waterloo: London West and Toronto Centre.

If the government was truly serious about embedding best practices in a systemic way into the finances of this province, they would just put the public accounts committee to work, because we're ready, and we want to work. We actually have 15 years of Auditor General's reports, which called out the Liberal government time and time again and then held those ministries responsible. Those ministries have to come back and report to us. They have to answer to the public accounts committee, in a public way, in an open and transparent way that strengthens our democracy.

But is this government concerned with that? Is that their first priority, Madam Speaker? I don't think so. The political posturing has actually already called into question this committee, which is why, by putting forward this amendment on the floor, we are trying to help the government have a purer process, if you will, one that is more balanced and one that is fair, and that the committee, at the end of their three months—because they are supposed to report on December 13. So, they have less than three months to do what the auditor does in one full year, and these are MPPs. I'm not sure how many accountants will be on the select committee, but the Auditor General has literally the talent, the expertise and the calling. That is her job. So, in a sense it's a level of duplication.

We will get some valuable information out of it, perhaps, at the end of the day, but it won't be seen as valuable because the Premier has already poisoned the process. He has already said what the end result is going to be. It's really interesting; it's quoted today in the *Toronto Star*. This is from the columnist Cohn: "A premier who threatens his predecessors is once again degrading our democratic discourse. Like his unprecedented and unhinged attacks on our 'unelected' judiciary...."

But it's very clear; most people actually see this for what it is. The PC members who sat on this side for a very long time, I will say, have already commented in the past on the consultants that the Liberals used. They used the same consultants to do this review, because it's not a forensic audit. It was no such thing. The minister who ordered it, the President of the Treasury Board, had to admit to reporters just yesterday that it was produced by private sector consultants at Ernst and Young Canada, not the qualified auditors in the firm's audit department. You can see how you are being completely contradictory in your approach. You criticize those multitudes of consultants who came in and discredited our Auditor General, and then you turned around and you used the same consultants to prop up your perspective of the numbers. This is a government that is essentially a walking contradiction, Madam Speaker.

To say that we propped up the Liberals—I have to put it on the record: You have the majority government. You're going to get your select committee. You don't even need to use these time allocation tools. You're going to get whatever you want because our electoral system is so unbalanced. You're going to move forward with the select committee. It's our job as the official opposition to make the process a better process and to make that select committee, as you review those numbers, have some credibility.

We know where the problems are, and the finance minister certainly knows where the problems are. In fact, the finance minister—when he sat right there just five months ago, this is what he said about the Auditor General. He said, "I'll tell you, I will always side with the Auditor General of Ontario and the Financial Accountability Officer of Ontario." This is from May 7, 2018; literally, just around the corner, Madam Speaker.

We have these independent officers: the Auditor General reviews the books as they are presented through the government; the Financial Accountability Officer looks at the projections around the economy. The FAO called out the fair hydro plan. We call it the unfair hydro plan, but it is still the plan that you've adopted, so that doesn't make any sense. Also, the Auditor General called out the accounting treatments of the pension plans, and for good reason. That money cannot be spent by the government; it's not the government's money. It shouldn't be on the books.

Again, this is a very contradictory perspective when the finance minister, whom I served with as finance critic for a number of years—and I thought it was a pretty productive relationship because we actually found the same

things. We agreed on a lot of the numbers, which I know is not supposed to happen. But the numbers were so egregious, I have to say, and they were so blatant. It was such a misuse of the government's power around spending. The priorities around spending were really skewed away from the people of this province. We agreed on that, so it is shocking that the finance minister wants a duplication of another committee and will not let us strengthen the process by ensuring that we can call witnesses too and that we broaden the scope of the committee, to make sure that if we're going to do it, let's do it right. Why is that so difficult? And why does one extra hour of debate so we can try to convince you, so we can try to help you—"help us help you." There's a line from a movie—I don't know; I like to quote it every once in a while.

1010

This is what the finance minister said, and I think I should end there: "What the Auditor General and primarily what the Financial Accountability Office just told us"—this, again, is just five months ago. "This government has told us that they are going to run a \$6.7-billion deficit by choice. Well, that is absolutely wrong. That is absolutely not true in two aspects. Number one, the Financial Accountability Officer said, 'No, that's not true. It's not a \$6.7-billion deficit this year. First of all, it's \$12 billion,'" and "'\$3 billion is already a deficit.'" So the \$15 billion that you uncovered, that you're so surprised to find out, we knew about in May.

What our amendment is meant to do is to give this government a sober second thought to re-evaluate the select committee and then to put the public accounts committee to work. Because we're ready, and so is the Auditor General.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to briefly rise on this. I think, in so doing, I can reflect on a lot of the things that the member opposite talked about in her speech. I also just want to quickly highlight the member from Peterborough–Kawartha, who did a spectacular job of helping people understand why it's so important that we move forward with the select committee.

The member opposite who gave a speech very eloquently highlighted many of the things that we saw over the last 15 years that caused not only the members who are now on this side of the House a lot of distress, but I know the members opposite, when they were in opposition alongside the former Conservative official opposition, shared many of the same frustrations that we are now talking about as we have come into government. That's one of the reasons we have to move so quickly with this select committee.

One of the reasons why we have to move so quickly, Madam Speaker, is because Ontarians, when they elected this government and when they elected the NDP to be the official opposition, sent a very clear message to those of us who were elected, to the new official opposition and to this Legislature. The message was: "Get the fiscal house

in order. But don't only work on getting the fiscal house in order; find out why and how we got to where we are."

In the lead-up to the last election, they heard the Financial Accountability Officer and the auditor telling us what the real fiscal situation was in the province of Ontario. Ontarians couldn't understand—and, I think, rightfully so—how it was that officers of Parliament were tabling reports that suggested that the deficit was far worse than the government was telling us. They couldn't understand why it was that officers of Parliament were being ignored—how the government was telling them one thing and how the opposition was saying something else—and how the officers of Parliament's reports were being ignored. Even worse, the government was actually taking on the officers of Parliament, in essence saying that they weren't doing their job, that they couldn't do their job.

Now, Madam Speaker, that gives us pause. That has to give us pause when we assume government—and all of us in this Legislature. It has to give us pause, and we have to take the time to say, "What happened? How did it happen? And why is it?"—

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Sorry. I'll also be sharing my time with the President of the Treasury Board.

We have to take pause, and we have to find out why it happened.

One of the things that we heard during the last election—I think all of us heard this as we went door to door—is that people were frustrated. They're extraordinarily frustrated. They work hard, Madam Speaker. Everybody works hard in this province: the people in the gallery; the people who come and watch us every day; the people who come to work from my riding who spend two hours in traffic, or from Pickering, Ajax and from all over this place—from Aurora. They work hard. They get up. They pay their taxes. They spend two hours in traffic, and as they're going back and forth, they're irritated that the money that they sent isn't solving the traffic problem. When they go to the hospital or the doctor, they get frustrated because they have to wait. They don't understand why 50% of the money that they make, the hard-earned money that they make, isn't solving those—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you.
Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30.
The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before we introduce our guests, the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound on a point of order.

Mr. Bill Walker: I would like to ask for unanimous consent for everyone in the House to wear a gold ribbon in support of childhood cancer. We have deputations and delegations here today.

I'd like to also invite all members for a photo op on the staircase at 11:50 following question period to support Childhood Cancer Awareness Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I am so pleased to introduce Bernie Farber, Dr. Karen Mock and Sabreena Ghaffar-Siddiqui, who were here this morning. They had a press conference this morning as part of the Canadian Anti-Hate Network. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Norman Miller: I'm pleased to let you know that today's page captain is Katie Fleming from Parry Sound–Muskoka, and she has quite a contingent joining her today. Joining her to watch her duties today are Katie's mom, Dr. Sarah MacKinnon; her dad, OPP Sergeant Josh Fleming; her sister, Margot Fleming; and her grandfather, retired Ontario Superior Court Justice the Honourable Robert MacKinnon. Katie's cousins, Claire and Amelia Finley, and her grandmother, Sharon MacKinnon, will be visiting a little later in the day. They're in the members' east gallery. Please welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: First of all, good morning. I would like to welcome from my riding Chief Elizabeth Atlookan, from Eabametoong; Charlie Okeese, councillor for Eabametoong First Nation; and also my assistant, Anne Chabot, and Peter Siebenmorgen.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I'm pleased today to have here a good friend of mine and former business partner, Mr. George Zabarelos.

Mr. Roman Baber: It's a pleasure to welcome guests from the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center to the Legislature, who will be hosting a Jewish holidays reception after question period in room 230. Joining us are president and CEO Avi Benlolo, Dr. Rose Rahmani, Andrew Braude and Frank Wilson. Friends of Simon Wiesenthal, welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Paul Calandra: It gives me a great pleasure to recognize our other page captain today, Deven Sinanan from my riding of Markham–Stouffville. He and all the pages are doing a great job, and I would like to welcome him. Of course, he is joined here today by his family in the gallery, Yasmin Sinanan and Andrew Moonilal. Welcome to Queen's Park. He's doing a great job. I know you're very proud of him.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I would like to welcome to the House today my friend Joe Simon, who's a business owner in my riding of Eglinton–Lawrence and also a great supporter in my campaign. He runs a business that employs a lot of the trades and is a very important part of the fabric of our community.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to welcome to the chamber the members of the forest industry in Ontario here today. It's National Forest Week, and there are over 24 members. I'd introduce each of you, but that would take up half of question period. Welcome. I hope everybody has a meeting with the forestry industry and understands its importance to the economy of Ontario.

Mr. David Piccini: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature this morning a delegation visiting from the Republic

of Kosovo: a member of Parliament, Mimoza Kusari-Lila, who is here along with the consul general, Donat Sylja, and Adijena Arifi, who is here as well. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Norman Miller: I'd like to welcome all the members of the forestry industry association to Queen's Park, but the Minister of Transportation, who—I know you're not supposed to say is away—is actually away dealing with tornadoes in his riding, has called me three times to make sure I introduce people from his riding. That is Jamie McRae of McRae Lumber in Whitney; Kris Heideman of Lavern Heideman and Sons in Eganville; Dana Shaw from Herb Shaw and Sons in Pembroke; and Jeff Muzzi from Ben Hokum and Son in Killaloe. Welcome to Queen's Park on behalf of John Yakabuski, the Minister of Transportation.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Introduction of guests?

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: No, a point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): A point of order: the member for Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I just wanted to acknowledge that today is September 27, and six years ago today my partner passed away. My girls can't be here today. I just wanted to make sure that I publicly acknowledge them and that he was here with us.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. All week, the Premier has been laying the groundwork for cuts to our schools, our hospitals and the services that families rely on. This week, we heard from the Premier's Bay Street consultants. They were supposed to produce a line-by-line audit. Instead, they produced a laundry list of schemes that will work wonders for the Premier's wealthy friends but leave families falling behind.

Does the Premier support this plan for deep cuts, new fees for families and a fire sale of public assets?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Leader of the Opposition: What we support is putting money back into the taxpayer's pocket, reducing taxes, reducing hydro bills and reducing the gas price by 10 cents a litre. We're halfway there.

We're about respecting the taxpayers. We aren't about taking care of the backroom deals and all the insiders and all the lobbyists that the Leader of the Opposition is working with. We're for the people, we're for the little guy, and we're going to continue being for the front-line workers and everyone in Ontario. It's about for the people.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it looks like the Premier's Bay Street consultants came up with the real Tory

platform. Unfortunately, people didn't get to see it until after the campaign.

Page 38 proposes new user fees on services that families rely on. Page 41 calls for reduced tax credits to businesses like, for example, the film and television tax credit. And page 43 proposes a sell-off of the OLG, LCBO and Ontario Power Generation for a one-time cash payout. It's a platform that will make the Premier's Bay Street buddies very happy, but it will leave families and businesses paying higher fees and higher hydro rates and with cuts to their schools and hospitals.

Is the Premier going to reject these ideas today, or is he ready to admit that this was the real Tory platform all along?

1040

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I just want to remind the Leader of the Opposition that we actually froze the fees. The licence registration fees that the Leader of the Opposition approved: The Minister of Transportation actually froze them. We aren't increasing them, but the Leader of the Opposition actually voted to increase it.

We're going to make sure that we freeze all user fees and make sure that we put money back into the taxpayers' pockets once again.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Not true; basically not true. Speaker, I believe that the Premier is out of order in his accusations, and I take them very personally. He hasn't been here. He knows very well that the New Democrats never supported a Liberal budget in their majority government. That's the reality, so I don't appreciate his untruth.

People were hoping for help with—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'll withdraw, Speaker, but you should pay attention to what the Premier is saying.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): You have to withdraw without qualification.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I do.

People were hoping for help with their schools, investment in their hospitals and a plan to create jobs from this government. Those are the priorities they were hoping the government would look at, but they're quickly learning that in Doug Ford's Ontario, change means a heck of a lot more of the same. Insiders get rich off fire sales of public assets. The wealthy get another round of tax cuts, and families get higher fees, higher hydro rates and funding cuts to their schools and hospitals.

If this is the change that the Premier was planning, why didn't he say so during the campaign?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition propped up the Liberal minority budgets, supported every single tax increase they put in, made sure they stood shoulder to shoulder propping up the Liberals to the tune of 97%.

The Leader of the Opposition is responsible for the financial disaster this province is facing today.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier, but you know: Ignorance is no excuse for a misinformed Premier.

Speaking of backroom meetings, can the Premier tell us who he has been meeting with concerning his plans to cut the minimum wage and take away vacation days for single moms, sick time for parents and fair wages for temporary workers?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Again, to the Leader of the Opposition: We need to turn this province around. We need to create jobs. There were 300,000 manufacturing jobs that were lost because of the Leader of the Opposition supporting the Liberal government.

They supported the carbon tax, the Green Energy Act. They're destroying this province, destroying jobs. Endless companies are heading south of the border because it's more feasible to do business down there.

We're going to make sure we attract new businesses, attract new jobs by getting rid of the carbon tax and the Green Energy Act, by lowering gas prices and lowering electricity costs. That's what we're going to do. We're going to start employing people. We're going to make sure Ontario thrives as a province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think it's important that the Premier knows that his party supported the Liberals 49% of the time and we supported them 53% of the time—a 4% difference. So in fact his rhetoric is something that he has to admit to himself, Speaker.

Today's news reports, though, that lobbyists are frantically working the backrooms, trying to cancel the scheduled increases to the minimum wage and to take away the new sick days and pay equity protections granted to Ontario workers this year.

The Premier talks about standing up for the little guy, Speaker, but the working moms who need a raise and a sick day don't have lobbyists in his backrooms to try to get him to do the right thing. Why is the Premier ignoring those moms, Speaker?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Again, 97% of the time—I know it's tough for the Leader of the Opposition to do the math. During the election they were \$5 billion off on their budget. I can assure you, every business I talk to, no matter if it's small, medium or large—they're struggling right now. They're struggling with Bill 148. Tens of thousands of people lost their jobs when it came to Bill 148.

We will make sure Ontario is competitive. We'll make sure we attract businesses from all over the world to open up here in Ontario and attract good-paying jobs.

I have to remind the Leader of the Opposition that if it was up to the Leader of the Opposition, there would be 7,500 people unemployed right now out at the Pickering nuclear facility. The Leader of the Opposition didn't worry

about that. They worry about lining the pockets of their buddies, making—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The priorities of this government are becoming more and more clear. The Premier is hearing from his Bay Street consultants and lobbyists, and he is delivering for them. But the working mom earning minimum wage won't be getting the sick days she needs, or the pay raise that she deserves, or the pay raise that she needs. Instead of a hand up, she's going to get hit with new service fees and hydro bills from a privatized electricity company.

It doesn't have to be this way, though. Will the Premier move ahead with the increase in minimum wage and commit to maintaining job benefits like sick days?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Leader of the Opposition: The single mom lost her job under the Liberals and the NDP regime. The single mom wants a job to make sure that she can put food on the table.

The Leader of the Opposition supported the outrageous hydro rates that were the highest in North America. I had people come up to me—single moms—all day, all night, when I was campaigning, saying, "I can't afford my hydro bill. I have a choice between heating and eating." But that was all right for the Leader of the Opposition. As long as she makes sure she takes care of her buddies, the special activists, the backroom deals—we know what it's all about.

The party is over with the taxpayers' money. It's about time we respect the taxpayers and start creating good-paying jobs.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier.

I have to say, again, ignorance is no excuse for an uninformed Premier who doesn't know what happened here over the years that he was nowhere to be found.

Yesterday, after four—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Again, I have to remind all members that the personal insults do not elevate the debate. We have to keep our questions focused on government policy. I'd ask all members to keep that in mind.

I recognize again the Leader of the Opposition to put her question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday, after four days of refusing to do so, the Premier tweeted a denunciation of hate speech. Will he now say out loud and unequivocally that he does not support Faith Goldy's campaign for mayor?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I've been clear over and over and over again every single day. I condemn hate speech, anti-Semitism and racism in all forms, be it from Faith Goldy, be it from anyone.

But let's talk about the hypocrisy—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Premier will withdraw his unparliamentary comment.

Hon. Doug Ford: Withdraw.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: For people in Ontario concerned about the rise of organized hate, this week has been very, very concerning. The government was already cutting support to programs like the anti-racism secretariat. But then they watched this week as the Premier refused again and again to distance himself from a candidate for Toronto mayor who promotes a white nationalist agenda and makes common cause with neo-Nazis.

Will this Premier say now, out loud and unequivocally, that he does not support her campaign?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Again, I find this so ironic. You have members there—from Ottawa Centre, who passionately supports the radical and extreme Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions, better known as the BDS movement, against Israel. I want you to denounce your own members. You have another member, from Brampton East, who demonstrated with an “eff the police” sign. Another member, from Toronto–St. Paul’s, used racial slurs against our police chief. I’ll tell you, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs has described one of your members as anti-Semitism disguised as anti-Zionist.

1050

I would like to know if the Leader of the Opposition is willing to denounce your own members. You had another member—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Time’s up.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, the personal insults and attacks do not elevate the debate; it diminishes the debate. Anybody watching would be most unimpressed. I’d ask all members to remember that.

Next question. Start the clock.

COLLEGE FUNDING

Mr. Stephen Lecce: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, Speaker: This Parliament should be seized with the success of our young people. There should be unity of purpose in this Legislature, focused on the enablement of our young people to learn, develop and compete and succeed. For students, the metric of success is not only the attainment of knowledge in the classroom, but the application of that knowledge into the workforce.

Progressive Conservatives on this side of the House are determined to give our students in this province every tool to achieve because this government is resolutely focused on enabling the next generation to pursue their full God-given potential.

Speaker, later today, I will join the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities at Seneca College in my riding of King–Vaughan for the official opening of Magna Hall.

Through you, Speaker, can the minister outline why this investment in our colleges will support our students, strengthen our knowledge economy and give our young people the tools to get a good-paying job?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for the question and the strong advocacy for the people of King–Vaughan and the young people of this province. As the member said, our government is focused on creating jobs and opportunity for our young people. I want all the people of Ontario to reach their full potential.

That is why I’m so excited that, later today, I will join the member from King–Vaughan, Seneca College President David Agnew and others, to officially open Magna Hall. The new Magna Hall, sitting at 200,000 square feet, is home to a new library, over 25 classrooms and computer and health care labs, providing hands-on learning for Seneca students. Magna Hall is providing the education, training and support that students need for the workforce of tomorrow, to bring well-paid jobs back to Ontario, grow our communities and make Ontario open for business again.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: Back to the minister: Minister, on behalf of students across the province, I say thank you for investing in their success, not indebting them to failure.

Young people in my riding of King–Vaughan and across the province remain concerned about their inheritance as a generation as they inherit a legacy of Liberal debt, of spending more on interest on debt than on funding colleges and universities in this province. The next generation asks one thing of this generation: that we never mortgage their future. Let me assure the young people in this province: We hear you. We are with you, and we will fight to protect your futures every single day.

Youth unemployment remains stubbornly high, effectively twice the provincial average. Young people cannot find good-paying jobs. The skills mismatch in our economy impedes our students’ ability to find employment related to their skills. This undermines our economic competitiveness.

To the minister: Could she outline how our investment in Seneca College will provide the next generation with job skills they need to attain good-paying jobs?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: As I said before, my focus is on making sure that Ontario students reach their full potential. Our government has promised the people of Ontario to create good jobs so our young people can find high-quality employment. I want to make sure that our young people have the skills they need to fill those jobs and build a career for themselves in their communities. And while the previous Liberal government accumulated massive debt loads which will be a burden on future generations, our government is listening to the people of Ontario, the business community and post-secondary institutions to ensure that our young people can find a good job in Ontario and have a good future.

Speaker, I congratulate Seneca College on the opening of Magna Hall and its focus on real-world, hands-on learning for students. I look forward to touring the facility later today and continuing to work with Seneca and all our institutions to ensure that Ontario is home to the best education system and workforce in the world.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Joel Harden: Before I get into my question, I have to say two words on behalf of the Jewish community where I'm from, given what the Premier just said: Oy gevalt. Goodness gracious. People here stand up against hate, Premier. We really reject your slurs.

I also have to say: My question, Speaker, is for the Deputy Premier. Earlier this week, the government released a report outlining privatization and outsourcing. Meanwhile, the Wettlaufer inquiry is taking place, and they say we should be focused on public delivery. Every dollar that goes into private care is a dollar taken away from public care.

Will the Deputy Premier expand the mandate of the Wettlaufer inquiry to include quality care and funding models, so we can ensure Ontario seniors and their families have access to the highest quality of long-term care?

Hon. Christine Elliott: The terms of reference for the Wettlaufer inquiry were set long ago and, in fact, they're almost finished hearing evidence. They're continuing to do their work preparing their report and recommendations, and we're awaiting those recommendations, which we take very seriously.

The safety of our seniors is a primary concern for us. We are going to wait for the Wettlaufer inquiry to finish and see what the recommendations are. We will take them into consideration and take that report very seriously, so thank you for that.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you, Deputy Premier, for that answer, but we know that people deserve dignity as they age. Despite the fact that the Wettlaufer inquiry is coming to an end, we need to ramp up on that model. What we need to make sure is that public dollars go towards front-line care and staffing. It shouldn't disappear into private profit margins. The Wettlaufer inquiry has heard testimony that says, "All roads lead to problems with staffing and funding."

Given the testimony to the Wettlaufer inquiry, will the Deputy Premier agree to expand the inquiry's mandate after its completion to ensure it looks at the impacts of privatization in long-term care across our province?

Hon. Christine Elliott: What I certainly can tell the member is that we are working on those issues every day at the Ministry of Health. One of our primary mandates and what we ran for on June 7 was to expand long-term care, to create 15,000 new beds in five years and another 15,000 in 10 years. We take that seriously. We are working on that every day to try and build up that capacity, because we do know that there are over 30,000 people who are waiting for spaces, and that's causing problems in our

hospitals and it's causing problems in our communities. We are working on that.

But you are right. We need to take a look at human resources. We do know that there is a shortage of personal support workers, for example, many of whom work in long-term care. We are looking at understanding why, although people are graduating, they're not continuing to work in the sector. There are lots of reasons for that. We're looking to correct that so that when we have those beds ready, they will be able to operate with qualified health care professionals to take care of the people who have worked hard all their lives and who deserve to be treated in comfort and with dignity.

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Donna Skelly: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Yesterday, it was announced that the WSIB had eliminated its unfunded liability, which, in 2011, was as high as \$14 billion. It was also announced that the higher-than-average premium rates paid by Ontario employers will be reduced by an average of 30%, beginning in January of 2019. All in all, it was great news for Ontario.

Since yesterday, I have heard from businesses and workers in my riding of Flamborough–Glanbrook who are interested in what this could mean for them. Can the minister explain why the elimination of the WSIB's unfunded liability was so important for the sustainability of the WSIB and why a rate reduction for employers is great news for all of Ontario?

Hon. Laurie Scott: I thank the member for the great question and for her work representing her constituents.

I'm honoured to rise in the House to speak about yesterday's announcement. Our government has long advocated that an unfunded liability was unacceptable. The elimination of the WSIB's unfunded liability means that the WSIB has enough money set aside to provide the benefits that injured workers are entitled to. It also means that workers can now have the confidence that if they are hurt on the job or develop illnesses related to their work, they will receive the benefits to which they are entitled.

1100

We will continue working with the WSIB to serve workers well, whether it's return to work, recovery outcomes or customer service. Our government will also work with the board to ensure a modern, financially sustainable and accountable workplace safety and insurance system, now and for generations to come. It was a great announcement yesterday for workers and for businesses.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Donna Skelly: To the minister: Clearly, both employers and workers will benefit from yesterday's announcement.

I've heard from many businesses, again in my riding of Flamborough–Glanbrook, about the excessively high premium rates they've been paying for many years. It seems to me that these high rates have hindered Ontario businesses.

Local businesses across Ontario like bakeries, mom-and-pop shops and diners need to have the resources to invest back into their businesses, to attract investment and to have a strong, confident workforce that is assured that, if the unthinkable happens, benefits to which they are entitled are there for them.

Can the minister please explain to this House how businesses and workers will benefit from this announcement?

Hon. Laurie Scott: Thank you again to the member for the question. It's true: Businesses across Ontario have been paying higher premium rates than other provinces for many years. This was a definite barrier for businesses to grow and expand.

With the elimination of the unfunded liability, the premium rate reduction for businesses across the province means that employers will be able to keep more of the money they've earned to invest right back into their operations and to help grow their businesses and create jobs for the people of Ontario, resulting in a \$1.45-billion injection into the Ontario economy. That is good news for the people of Ontario.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is for the Minister of Education. Tucked into the Ernst and Young report amongst sweeping recommendations to sell off public assets like the LCBO, there's one line that should give all parents pause. It calls for "alternate arrangements" for funding education, including "providing funding to individuals, who can then choose their service providers through a form of market activity..."

Will the minister tell us now if she plans to bring American-style vouchers and charter schools to Ontario? Is the minister really planning to funnel public dollars to private education?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Speaker, to the member opposite, through you: I would like to share that what we're doing right now is absolutely focusing on preparing our students for the best path forward to be equipped for 21st-century jobs.

The fear-mongering and the propaganda that come from that side of the House and from that opposition party are just non-stop. I want to assure people that as we embark on our consultation, we are going to be working on a path forward with educators, with parents, with students, with interested organizations that want to make a difference and that want to work with us. Just yesterday, I met with the public school board trustees association, and they reported publicly that we had a fantastic meeting.

Honestly, we are moving forward in a positive manner, setting all the fear-mongering aside.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Mr. Speaker, it's right there in the report. Though it is just 48 pages long, the government's \$95,000 commissioned report calls for radical changes that would devastate Ontario's public education system.

This approach in the United States has decimated—decimated—public education. You only have to look to

the south to see that. I'm actually really surprised that the Minister of Education wouldn't just end this conversation by saying, "No, we're not thinking about privatizing education. We're not thinking about charter programs. We're not thinking about vouchers." But you won't say that; the Minister of Education will not say that.

Why? Will the minister stand up for Ontario families and reject the privatization of education now? Will she do that now?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I'll tell the member opposite what I reject: I reject the fallacies that they are trying to project into the conversation. The fact of the matter is, that's not our report. They need to stop the falsehoods that they're perpetuating.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I ask the Minister of Education to withdraw the unparliamentary remark.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I withdraw.

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

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. This morning I spent time with my friend Bernie Farber, who's here with colleagues. They're here and they're concerned. They're calling on the Premier to disassociate himself from Faith Goldy, a known white supremacist.

I know the Premier sent out a tweet last night denouncing hate speech, even if coming from Faith Goldy. Mr. Speaker, that is not enough. It's not enough for those people who are truly frightened by seeing their Premier standing shoulder to shoulder with a white supremacist.

The Premier needs to say those words here. I'm calling on the Premier today to be a true leader, to say those words, to say those words here in the people's House, to say, "I denounce Faith Goldy and what she stands for. I do not stand shoulder to shoulder with her and I do not support her campaign. I apologize to those people who are frightened and deeply hurt."

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for Etobicoke—Etobicoke south? Ottawa South. Sorry to insult the people in Etobicoke. Ottawa South. Through you, Mr. Speaker, I would—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That's not helpful, Premier. Complete your answer, please.

Hon. Doug Ford: Maybe the member from Ottawa South should talk to his friend from Ottawa Centre over there—Ottawa Centre, who passionately supports the radical BDS movement against Israel. Maybe you should be talking to your friend in the far corner over there—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Please make your comments through the Chair and depersonalize them.

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Maybe the Leader of the Opposition should denounce one of her candidates in Scarborough—Agincourt. Tasleem Riaz shared an inspirational quote from Adolf Hitler on her Facebook—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Premier will take his seat.

Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: I thank the Premier for his response—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Order.

I recognize the member for his supplementary.

Mr. John Fraser: —over here, not over there. Mr. Speaker, that's not the response that I expected. That's not what a true leader does. My father taught me that when you've done something wrong, when you've hurt someone, when you've made a mistake, you need to apologize. And when you make that apology, you need to do it in front of the people who you've hurt.

Two days ago, another leader in this Legislature, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, said those words. He said those words out in the hall, and I know if I asked him today, he'd say those words right here. So, Speaker, through you to the Premier: Again I call on the Premier to denounce Faith Goldy, to denounce what she stands for, to renounce her campaign and to apologize to those people who are hurt and deeply concerned.

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I would like the Leader of the Opposition to denounce one of her candidates. Tasleem Riaz shared an inspirational quote from Adolf Hitler—from Adolf Hitler. The Leader of the Opposition stood side by side and campaigned with this candidate, took pictures with this candidate. I'd like the leader to denounce the candidate from Scarborough—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Leader of the Opposition has to put the sign down.

Hon. Doug Ford: I'd also like the Leader of the Opposition to denounce the Ottawa Centre—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Just a second. Sorry.

I think all members know that you're not allowed to hold up props and signs. I would ask members on both sides of the House to stop putting up signs.

Premier, if you'll briefly conclude your comments.

1110

Hon. Doug Ford: The member from Ottawa Centre sitting in the corner, again, supports the radical BDS. You can't—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Premier's comments—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The House will come to order. The Premier will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Premier will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The clock is ticking.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Next question. Let's move on. The member for Peterborough-Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: My question is for the Minister of—
Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Premier will withdraw.

Hon. Doug Ford: Withdraw.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. Come on. We can do better than this.

Next question.

RED TAPE REDUCTION

Mr. Dave Smith: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. A month ago, our government of the people announced a province-wide consultation with businesses across Ontario to reduce red tape. Fifteen years of failed Liberal policies have done serious damage to our competitiveness. Red tape is chasing job creators out of this province.

In Ontario, the regulatory burden is getting worse every year, yet across the border in the United States they're reducing it. It's making it attractive for Ontario investment to leave this province.

Could the minister give us an update on what he has heard and how our government will make Ontario more competitive?

Hon. Jim Wilson: I thank my honourable colleague for the question.

Business owners have described a toxic environment here in Ontario, created by the former Liberal government and propped up by the NDP.

In my own riding, Bistro Burger, a long-time fixture of downtown Alliston, shut down after the implementation of Bill 148. Skyrocketing costs left a number of people unemployed.

Joel Lipchitz, an accountant and owner of Lake Simcoe Arms Pub and Restaurant, employs close to 60 people. He expressed his frustration to me recently. He and his wife put everything on the line and, in their own words, were treated like "pariahs" by the former government.

Speaker, hard-working people who risk money and put their livelihoods on the line to pursue their dreams should be rewarded and encouraged, not suffocated by red tape and overregulation. We have 380,000-and-counting pieces of red tape that we're finding. BC has 200,000—and no one has told me that BC is a bad place to live. We have to work hard—every cabinet minister and every member of our caucus is working hard—to cut that red tape, not down the centre, but right across, to get out of the way of businesses and create jobs.

Ontario is open for business.

Interjections.

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

Supplementary.

Mr. Dave Smith: Minister, those stories sound like they came from a horror movie.

Ontario used to be the economic engine of Canada. People flocked to Ontario to pursue their dreams and build their lives for their families.

The Liberals lost sight of the fact that the treasury is the people of Ontario's money. Far too many provincial regulations are inflexible. They duplicate each other. They're out of date and misaligned with other jurisdictions.

Our government for the people has begun to implement policy to restore accountability and open Ontario for business once again. Can the minister please update the Legislature on Ontario's changing economic climate?

Hon. Jim Wilson: That's a great question from my colleague.

I also want to shout out to MPP and parliamentary assistant Michael Parsa. He has been doing these round tables. They've been a huge success, and they've been providing us with great examples of red tape and where we can cut and get out of the way of business so they can create jobs.

It's all about putting food on the table for families, Mr. Speaker. That's what we're all about. We can do that, we will do that, and we are doing that. I don't want to be all doom and gloom. I want to congratulate Microsoft. They're creating 500 full-time positions and an additional 500 positions for co-ops and interns. Uber is creating 300 jobs for technicians and engineers. Amazon is creating 1,500 construction jobs and permanently employing 600 people with its fulfillment centre in Ottawa, and there's another one to come in Ms. Jones's riding, in Caledon. And Instacart recently announced that they'll be hiring 200 employees.

Congratulations to all these great job creators, to all these great employers. Ontario is open for business. They're getting the message, and I hope soon we'll be even more open for business.

INDIGENOUS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: *Remarks in Oji-Cree.*

Speaker, this question is for the Deputy Premier. Your ancestors and mine signed Treaty 9 in 1905, with adhesions—essentially, additions—made in 1929. The basis of that treaty is how together we manage and share the benefits from the land and then do so in a way that is mutually beneficial.

A recent court decision in the Ontario Divisional Court ruled that the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines failed to properly carry out the crown's constitutional duty to consult with the Eabametoong before approving the Landore gold exploration project.

Deputy Premier, do you intend to respect the court's decision and live up to the obligations under the treaty and properly consult the community, as per the court's decision?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I thank the member opposite for that question. Ontario is blessed with incredible opportunities when it comes to our natural resources. It's true not only for us and Ontarians but also our Indigenous communities, who stand to benefit from economic development and mining, forestry and natural resource development.

We are committed as a government to bringing good jobs back to this province in northern Ontario by developing our natural resources, working with our strong local partnerships, our municipalities and our Indigenous communities to make Ontario open for business again. We will duly consult with Indigenous communities, as well as northern Ontarians and rural municipalities, going forward as we develop our northern resources.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Back to the Deputy Premier: On July 9, 2018, the Matawa chiefs sent a welcoming letter to the Premier asking to re-engage the vital regional negotiations necessary in order to set up the Ring of Fire.

The Premier's office wrote the chiefs to say that the Minister of Indigenous Affairs would follow up. That was on August 9, yet no meetings have been scheduled.

The historic regional framework agreement for the Ring of Fire has stalled because the government hasn't engaged with the Matawa chiefs since this election. As noted, Mr. Speaker, Eabametoong First Nation Chief Atlookan is here today. Will the Premier direct the Minister of Indigenous Affairs not to get on a bulldozer but to meet with Chief Atlookan today to begin the dialogue as affirmed by the courts so that future mines may some day go forward in a way that honours the treaty and that is mutually beneficial to all parties?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thank you again for that question, member opposite. Speaker, through you to the member: The Ring of Fire has great potential for the province of Ontario. Unfortunately, over the past 15 years, it has been stagnant, not only because of lack of consultations but also because the government opposite promised time and time again but failed to follow through, which is the problem with Ontario in general.

We need a province that's open for business. We need a province that's growing the resource development throughout northern Ontario in our rural communities. That is what's going to make Ontario strong again. That's what's going to make Ontario open for business.

The Minister of Indigenous Affairs and the Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines takes his duty to consult very seriously, and he will continue to build those relationships with Indigenous communities and municipalities to build lasting partnerships.

My ministry has been tasked with developing resource-sharing with communities across this province. We are working toward that. We are going to be partners in these communities, with Indigenous communities, with northern Ontario, with rural communities. Ontario is open for business under the government of Doug Ford.

1120

CONCUSSIONS

Ms. Lindsey Park: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Yesterday, members on all sides of this House commemorated Rowan's Law Day. I was happy to see so much purple in this place. Even the Minister of Finance ditched his traditional yellow tie to

wear a purple one. I think that's worthy of a round of applause.

However, Rowan's Law Day isn't about clothing. It's about commemorating the life of Rowan Stringer, a 17-year-old Ottawa varsity rugby player who died from sustaining multiple concussions resulting in a catastrophic brain injury. Rowan's Law was made to help keep people safe and ensure they know how to deal with concussions safely. Can the minister outline what our government is doing to ensure we educate people about concussions and how to properly deal with them?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you to the member for Durham. I know you understand how important concussion awareness is.

I cannot thank and acknowledge the work of Rowan's parents Kathy and Gordon Stringer enough for all their hard work on Rowan's Law. This is something they've been working on since their daughter was lost to a preventable death. I'd also like to extend my thanks to my friend and colleague the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, the member from Ottawa South and the member from Waterloo for their work on making this bill a reality in the last Parliament.

Our government is committed and eager to implement the recommendations made by the Rowan's Law Advisory Committee. That includes implementing Rowan's Law Day and a multimedia campaign to ensure that children, athletes, coaches, educators and parents know what to do when they suspect a concussion.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Lindsey Park: I'm so glad that Rowan's legacy is being used to ensure that we can prevent more injury and, in some cases, even death. I'm also encouraged that we're able to set aside our differences on all sides of the House to support this specific initiative and keep Ontarians safe on the playground, on the fields and on the ice.

I've had a number of teammates whose sporting ambitions were completely derailed by this type of injury. Everybody needs to be on board to ensure we're keeping athletes and kids safe. That includes parents, educators and coaches. We all need to take these steps. Could the minister explain what these groups should do when it comes to concussions and the roles they can play in treating and preventing concussions?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I'd be pleased to. We all have a role to play in helping people stay safe when it comes to concussions.

As an athlete, if you suspect a concussion, ask your health care professional for a recovery plan you can follow. You shouldn't be afraid to leave the game when safety is the most important thing.

As a parent or guardian, ask your child's sports club about their concussion prevention and management policies. Make sure they have a concussion protocol.

As a coach, ask your organization about concussion training available to you. Knowing the first symptoms of a concussion can go a long way in preventing further damage.

As an educator, you can ask your principal about your school's return-to-sport and return-to-learn concussion policies.

Working together, we will make sure that our athletes are safe and supported.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: My question is for the Minister of Health. This week, the Premier will make a final decision on the future of Ontario's overdose prevention sites. Technically, this decision will be based on the recommendation made by the Minister of Health. Will the Minister of Health tell the people of Ontario what was in her recommendation?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. We have been working on this issue quite diligently over the last two months. I have visited several overdose prevention sites and supervised consumption sites. I have done a walk-around. I have consulted with experts, neighbourhood people, people with lived experience who have given me their thoughts, and I can tell you that I have shared this information with the Premier's office. We've been working very collaboratively on this issue, and we expect to be making an announcement very shortly.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: To the Minister of Health: It's no secret that the Premier is firmly opposed to these sites staying open. He was clear about it during the campaign. The minister herself said that, even with her recommendation, "Whatever I think is really not the point that matters. It's the Premier's decision."

If the Premier unilaterally decides to shut down these sites, will the minister finally stand up for the thousands of families affected by the opioid crisis and demand that the Premier continue to fund overdose prevention sites, or will she allow extensive evidence to be overridden by his uninformed personal views?

Hon. Christine Elliott: As the member will know, the Premier has been very clear for many months that he wanted to make an evidence-based decision on whether these sites should remain open or should be closed down. That is the information that I have been collecting for these past several months and that I have been sharing with the Premier's office.

The Premier, it is true, makes the ultimate decision, but that doesn't mean that we don't work collaboratively on it. We have been doing that, and we will be making a decision. We will be making a recommendation. We are working with the Premier's office, and the Premier and I will be making an announcement very shortly on that.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Ross Romano: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. In recognition of this being National Forest Week, it is important to appreciate the abundant amount of opportunities that are provided

through our unique provincial forests. In fact, 66% of our province is made up of forested areas.

Unfortunately, while the previous Liberal government was in power, the concerns of this industry were ignored. According to Statistics Canada, under that Liberal government, the forestry industry lost 51,000 jobs from 2003 to 2016. That's a 51% decrease over that span.

During the election, our government ran on a promise to consult with residents about a multitude of issues. Mr. Speaker, will the minister please tell us how he will consult with Ontarians to attract investment, create jobs and foster those jobs in the forestry sector?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to thank the member from Sault Ste. Marie, who is a strong voice for northern Ontario.

This morning, I was pleased to announce my ministry's plan to engage with Ontarians as we work toward a provincial forestry strategy. Over the coming months, we're going to sit down with industry and municipal leaders to listen to how we can tear down barriers and create an environment for growth. We're also looking forward to hearing from our Indigenous communities, who will also be an important part of the process.

Mr. Speaker, we want to ensure that the forestry sector is driven by a long-term vision for growth and sustainability and that communities across the province share in the prosperity from this abundant renewable resource. The forestry industry generates over \$15 billion in revenue and supports 150,000 direct and indirect jobs in 260 communities throughout this province. I look forward to continuing to grow the industry. A provincial forestry strategy is an important first step in unleashing the potential for Ontario's forest industry.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Ross Romano: I want to thank the minister for his answer. I want to thank you for the great work you're doing to advance this very important cause on behalf of the people of Ontario.

Our government for the people promised that it would work hard to make Ontario the most prosperous region in North America to do business in, and Ontario's forestry industry is a very important part of that. Forestry is vital to the social, economic and environmental well-being of the communities across Ontario, and hard-working people and families depend on the forestry sector.

I know that there's more we can do to grow this industry, to create more jobs and opportunities in northern Ontario and across the province and to be more competitive and a stronger player in the global economy. I'm pleased to hear that our government will be listening to the people in regard to creating a provincial forestry strategy. Mr. Speaker, will the minister please explain how this strategy will ensure that the voices of the people of Ontario will be heard to ensure the future success of this vital industry?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thank you again for that question. As the member from Sault Ste. Marie stated, over half of the forestry jobs in Ontario were lost due to Liberal neglect during their time of governing. That is why I am pleased

today to announce to the House that, starting next month, our government will be holding round tables and gathering feedback online to help the province lay out a strategy for promoting economic growth within the forestry sector.

1130

The first round table session will be held in November in Sault Ste. Marie, followed by additional sessions in the new year in Kitchener, Kenora, Kapuskasing, North Bay, Thunder Bay, Pembroke, Hearst and Timmins. We are also inviting people to have their say about the forestry strategy by emailing us at forestrystrategy@ontario.ca. I look forward to hearing how our government can reduce barriers so that industry can create jobs and prosperity not just in northern Ontario but across the province.

Ontario's wood and wood products are recognized around the world as the highest standard of forest management anywhere. Sustainable forest management helps Ontario's forestry remain healthy and productive, grows our economy and provides good jobs for Ontario. Ontario is open for business, Mr. Speaker.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is for the Deputy Premier. In my community of London North Centre, Dr. Chris Mackie tells me the temporary overdose prevention site has saved 35 lives and conducted 150 rehab referrals in as many days. This government committed to reviewing the evidence and providing an answer by the end of September. But the evidence was already clear: This approach saves lives. It's a well-researched and proven harm reduction tool for combating this unprecedented public health crisis. Does the Conservative Party honestly think this problem will go away if these sites are shut down?

Will this government commit here and now to continuing to fund London's temporary overdose prevention site past the deadline of September 30? Tell this House here and now.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. I am certainly well aware that there is a serious issue in many parts of Ontario with opioid overuse and overdoses, so it is something that we are taking very seriously here. The health and safety of every person of Ontario is obviously a concern.

With respect to overdose prevention sites and supervised consumption sites, I'm very pleased to say that Dr. Mackie was actually one of the people who presented to us on the work that he's doing in London, the activities he has undertaken and the wraparound supports that he is also able to provide. This is something that we took very seriously into consideration. I'm very grateful that Dr. Mackie took the time to come from London to provide us with that evidence. That is the kind of information that we need for the Premier to make an evidence-based decision about whether these sites should continue or not.

That is something that the Premier and I will be announcing very shortly, recognizing the September 30 deadline for responding and extending the timelines if they are to be extended.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'm glad to hear that this government is considering solid, robust, peer-reviewed evidence, because these services save lives and they make a huge difference.

We've also been concerned over here in the official opposition, because the 45-day pause on the overdose prevention sites has really reinforced this public health crisis. This crisis is bigger than HIV in the 1990s, and polio. In fact, if you put those two epidemics together and times them by two, you would get the same number of people dying each year in Canada from opioids.

In the face of a public health crisis and the overwhelming evidence that this treatment works, I trust that this government will do the right thing and continue to fund temporary overdose prevention sites. It is the right thing to do. It's the humane thing to do.

Hon. Christine Elliott: The member is absolutely correct that there is a serious public health issue involved here. There are different ways that one can combat it. We have spoken with the Office of the Chief Coroner and Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario, as well as many other people, including people with lived experience, who have told us quite directly what these sites have meant to them.

We are taking all of that information into consideration in terms of making recommendations to the Premier, much of which has already been shared with the Premier. As I've said before, recognizing that this deadline is coming up, in order to achieve the extension, if that is to be done, it has to be done before September 30. Therefore, an announcement will be made very shortly.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. David Piccini: My question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Minister, a few days ago we heard the deeply disturbing and shocking news that Terri-Lynne McClintic, who was convicted of the kidnapping, murder and rape of young eight-year-old Tori Stafford, was to be transitioned into a healing lodge.

I'm aware that our Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs wrote a letter to the Minister of Public—we always know that the federal Liberals put the interests of criminals above those of victims.

Interjections.

Mr. David Piccini: I would advise you to just listen.

In fact, we knew that the Minister of Agriculture spoke to the father—and our Premier spoke to the father as well—and has made it clear that we will do everything to ensure that justice is served as originally intended for Ms. McClintic.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister give this place an update on what he is doing to urge the government to take immediate action to reverse this shameful decision?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for this question. I want to begin by reiterating that my thoughts and the thoughts of our government remain with the family of Tori Stafford.

We are shocked and saddened that such a change in direction was taken by the federal government, bringing back feelings of anger and despair for all of those affected. As I mentioned before in the Legislature, decisions like this made by our federal government can seriously impact the public's confidence in our correctional systems.

I'll be writing a letter myself to the federal Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Mr. Ralph Goodale, to get clarification on how such a decision could possibly have been made, and what can be done to reverse it.

Our government has remained committed to improving our community safety and correctional services. This includes working with our federal counterparts to do the same and to ensure that justice is served as intended.

Canada can do better, and our government here in Ontario will encourage the federal government to do so as well. We must do better.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. David Piccini: Minister, thank you for that answer, and thank you for your swift action on this. Thank you to the Premier for his swift action as well.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be part of a government that has stood on principle on this issue, that has made it clear in this place, on record, that we will not stand by as this shameful decision by our federal government has been made.

In fact, we've also heard the attitude of the federal Minister of Public Safety in his initial remarks on this, who described the crimes committed by Terri-Lynne McClintic as "bad practices."

Mr. Speaker, can the minister reassure this Legislature that this matter is being taken with the seriousness it deserves? And can he give us an update on what he and our government is going to do to ensure that we put the rights of victims before those of criminals?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Mr. Speaker, I refer this to the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I thank the member for the question, and I thank the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for treating this matter with the utmost importance.

Upon hearing about the sudden and disturbing news in the change of direction taken by the federal government regarding this matter, we reached out to the Stafford family. The family expressed that they are grateful to finally have a government that cares, takes action and works for the people.

Our government stands behind the Stafford family, and I am encouraged to see that the community of Woodstock is taking action to call on the federal government to change its decision. The residents in my riding are watching this matter very closely. We're all hoping to see quick action taken so that justice can be delivered and closure can be brought to the family of Tori Stafford.

Together with the Premier and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, we are taking real action to see what can be done to correct this poor and unfortunate decision.

Mr. Speaker, earlier it was mentioned that yesterday we were all wearing purple for Rowan's Law. I just want to say I'm still wearing it today. It was Tori Stafford's favourite colour.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Jessica Bell: Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Transit experts and the head of the TTC have said that breaking up Toronto's transit to upload the subway to the province is a disaster in waiting.

The people of Toronto deserve to know what's happening with their transit system. Can the Premier share the details of this government's plan to upload the TTC?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: During the election, we made it very, very clear that we need a regional transportation system to get people from point A to point B in a rapid fashion. Our number one priority is going to be to build that downtown relief line. We're going to make sure there's a three-stop subway in Scarborough.

Over the years, we haven't been able to build transit in this city. We have not been able to build transit. We're going to build a regional transportation system, a great subway system, one of the best in the world. But we're going to start getting the shovels in the ground.

Years ago, Mr. Speaker, when the province downloaded the transit—there was an outcry when they downloaded the transit. Now we're going to support the TTC. We're going to make sure we keep the workers there. We're going to make sure we support the front-line workers and we'll build the best regional transportation system in the world.

CHILDHOOD CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound has a point of order.

Mr. Bill Walker: I would just like to remind everyone of the Childhood Cancer Awareness Month photo that will take place on the grand stairway at 11:50 to honour all those children fighting this terrible disease.

VISITOR

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Point of order, Speaker.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I would just like to acknowledge that Dr. Karen Mock is in the members' gallery. I would like to welcome her to Queen's Park and thank her for the great work she has done with JSpaceCanada and other organizations.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Ottawa South has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given

by the Premier concerning denouncing Faith Goldy. This matter will be debated Tuesday at 6 p.m.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): It is my pleasure to introduce a former member of provincial Parliament who served in this House for many years and, I might add, always demonstrated respect for Parliament in the way he behaved: the member for York–Mackenzie in the 36th Parliament; the member for Oak Ridges, 37th and 38th Parliaments; and the member for Newmarket–Aurora, 39th and 40th Parliaments, Mr. Frank Klees. Welcome to the Legislature.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Today, we have in the members' gallery two visitors from the Niagara region: Councillor Bruce Timms from the regional council of Niagara; also, we have a member of the NPCA who is here today to watch the Auditor General table her report, James Kaspersetz. Thank you very much for being in the gallery today.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: I would like to welcome to the members' gallery today the past president of the Dunwin Temple, Mr. Ranjit Bassi; community activist Mr. Parminder Shoker; the host of Sanjha Punjab radio and TV show, Mr. Bob Dosanjh; and visiting from India is Mr. Bikramjit Goraya, who guided me around the Golden Temple just a few weeks ago, commonly known as the Harmandir Sahib. I really encourage everyone here to visit the Golden Temple in India. It is such beautiful architecture. Welcome to the members' gallery. All of them are joined by my husband, Ashwani Tangri.

Mr. Bill Walker: Regrettably, my guests, I think, are still coming through security, but they will be here momentarily. I just want to pay acknowledgement that this large group is coming on behalf of Canadian Childhood Cancer Awareness Month.

I have Neal Rourke, Advocacy for Canadian Childhood Oncology Research Network; David Jenkins of the Maggie Project; Evelyn Wilson, Tears Mean Love foundation; Agnes Potts, grandparent in action; Jared Brown, father of survivor; Emily Brown, child survivor; Pat Dalzell, Bruce Power medical radioisotope program; Susan Kuczynski, Ontario Parents Advocating for Children with Cancer parent liaison; Darcy Nicksy, SickKids hospital clinical trials pharmacologist; Jill Ross, RN, CEO, Pediatric Oncology Group of Ontario, POGO; Jacqui DeBique, POGO communications director; Dr. David Hodgson, medical director of POGO; Jamie Irvine, POGO, plus young adult cancer survivor; Denise Bebenek, CEO, Meagan's Walk; Sandi Hancox,

Childhood Cancer Canada; and Kyle Crook, Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Jessica Bell: I recently met workers from the injured workers' action group. I met a lady called Alicia Micallef who suffered a severe concussion from a workplace fall. Her doctor ruled her unable to work, but the WSIB denied her claim because a caseworker with no medical knowledge of concussions ruled so. Alicia now struggles to pay the bills and still suffers from PTSD and anxiety based on that incorrect denial of benefits. Her story is common.

In 2016, doctors filed a complaint with the Ombudsman arguing that WSIB systematically ignores the medical opinions of workers' own physicians. It's WSIB's job to help injured workers, not deny their claims. But instead of reforming the WSIB, this government is taking us from bad to worse by cutting employer premiums to the WSIB by 30%. This will mean that WSIB will deny more valid workers' claims and hurt people like Alicia. We can do better.

It's time to build safer workplaces so injuries don't happen in the first place, and it's time to ensure the WSIB does its job and provides financial support to injured workers who need it.

RAIL SAFETY

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: This week is Rail Safety Week in Canada, and it is a good time to remember how important it is to teach both children and adults about the continuing need for safety.

Rail lines and rail crossings are safe for drivers and pedestrians, but only if people respect their use, particularly at grade crossings. No one should try to race a train to a crossing, nor should anyone ignore grade crossings. You can stop if you have to, but by the time the train driver sees you, it's too late for the train to stop.

I recently met with representatives of CN to learn about their work providing transportation services for businesses and for supporting our local communities. They know how vital rail safety is. I was pleased to sign the Rail Safety Pledge they promote with the safety group Operation Lifesaver. CN and others work with Operation Lifesaver on educational activities, with more than 300,000 children and adults benefiting from their presentations every year.

I commend groups like Operation Lifesaver and good corporate citizens like CN for promoting rail safety and teaching both adults and children how to keep themselves safe.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr. Wayne Gates: I want to rise today and talk about a serious health and safety issue happening here in Ontario. It's about the health and safety of our corrections officers. These women and men carry out an incredibly stressful and difficult job on a daily basis, but the consistent underfunding of our corrections system is putting them in danger.

In Niagara, we have a jail that is busting at the seams, and on the weekends, it's worse. I've seen it myself. People in that jail don't go outside. There are 35 of them in a dorm that's meant for 28, and sometimes they're being held in a room without washrooms. In situations like that, bad things are bound to happen.

You know what happens next? These people act out. Violence happens. Guards get hurt. Recently, a front-line officer was attacked with a broom handle. He needed eight staples in his head to close the wound. He survived and he's healing physically with his family, but things could have been much worse. Things still can be worse.

I've written to the minister but I have yet to hear back. We need to take action immediately. We need to ensure our jails have proper funding so that people going there on weekends aren't forced into cramped situations with violent offenders. We need to listen to front-line staff and make sure they have the services and supports they need. They're putting their safety on the line. They should be able to count on us.

No worker in the province of Ontario should have to worry about whether they're going to be able to go home at night safe from work. That's our responsibility. It's time this government acts to make that a reality.

CHILDHOOD CANCER

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to acknowledge that my guests are here in the members' gallery now.

September is Childhood and Adolescent Cancer Awareness Month in Ontario and globally. Along with my colleagues in the Legislature, I am wearing a gold ribbon awareness pin in support of the over 5,000 Ontario children that the Pediatric Oncology Group of Ontario, POGO, confirms will be diagnosed with cancer this decade. Even though 86% of children survive five years beyond diagnosis, cancer still remains the leading cause of non-communicable death for children.

Ontario's finest nurses, doctors, dietitians, researchers, social workers, oncologists, non-profits, medical radio-isotope producers, palliative care and family support foundations are here today. They are joined by my constituent and international awareness advocate Neal Rourke and the family of the late Maggie Jenkins of Belmont, who have graciously supplied the pins we are wearing. The tireless and innovative efforts of our guests are a golden example that all of us can play a role in helping children with cancer.

On August 31, four-year-old Jordan McInerney of Barrie opened the Toronto stock market. Jordan, who is in

junior kindergarten today, is one of the most recent children supported by our health care system to receive CAR T-cell therapy, an immunotherapy advancement showing over 90% success in cancers such as Jordan's relapse, leukemia. Jordan was treated in Philadelphia, but we are pleased to report the same treatment is now available in Toronto at SickKids hospital, where children can receive this lifesaving treatment.

Not all children are as fortunate as Jordan, sadly. Our researchers are poised to change this in many cases, and as government, we must remain ever-vigilant to create policy aligning health care with the innovative and rapidly occurring medical breakthroughs, so that advancements for our children can happen in the most expedient and safe environment possible.

I wear my pin proudly today in memory of all children who have died from cancer, including constituents Hayley Nuttall, Conah Higgins, Cassie Boucher, Candice Ebel-Campbell and Brendan Rourke. I respectfully ask all of us to commit to ensuring that we give our children and youth every opportunity to grow, thrive and live in a world free from cancer in all its forms. It is my hope that we will soon—for the dream of my hero, Terry Fox—find a cure so that someday the hurting will stop.

HERON GATE

Mr. Joel Harden: Affordable housing and gentrification are ongoing problems across this province, and today I rise to talk about Heron Gate. This is a community we haven't talked about yet in the sitting of this Legislature. It's unfortunate, Speaker, because as a legal studies professor, I used to teach students about the legacy of Africville, where hundreds of Black Nova Scotian residents were moved out of their residences in working-class Dartmouth in dump trucks. It's a legacy of shame. It's a racist way in which we relocated an entire community. We're supposed to learn from our history. Unfortunately, in south Ottawa, we're not.

1310

We have a situation right now that, on September 30, hundreds of families are going to be evicted from their homes in the south end of Ottawa in a community that had to pull together despite a landlord which has not upgraded its facilities. They are appealing to us, they're appealing to this Legislature, to stand by them. There are 15 families that remain. The property owner, Timbercreek, a \$7.5-billion company based in Ottawa, yesterday shut off the gas to those homes. They spent last night without heating and without the comfort of their homes.

They have a legal campaign. I encourage any of my friends in this House, anybody watching this campaign, to donate to their legal campaign. I encourage the mayor of Ottawa, Jim Watson, to pick up the phone, help somebody other than wealthy developers in Ottawa, and help the residents of Heron Gate make sure they get justice for their families. It matters in the city of Ottawa.

FRIENDS OF SIMON WIESENTHAL CENTER

Mr. Roman Baber: With great pleasure, I rise to recognize the work of our guests in the Legislature today, the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center.

Today, over the lunch period, many of us visited the reception held by the FSWC and had an opportunity to learn about the important work they do. This non-profit human rights organization is committed to countering racism and anti-Semitism while promoting principles of tolerance, acceptance and Canadian democratic values through advocacy and education.

Their important work is guided by the words of Holocaust survivor and founder, Simon Wiesenthal: "Freedom is not a gift from heaven. One must fight for it every day."

The Friends of Simon Wiesenthal are working all across Ontario. They work with various communities. They provide Holocaust studies. They work with young offenders to give them a second chance. They inspire and empower Canadians to speak in support of freedom and democracy everywhere. They are here to help educate so that the Holocaust or genocide never happen again—never again—not for the Jewish people, not for anyone.

I'm pleased to support the great work that the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center do and thank for them for their efforts.

GUN VIOLENCE

Mr. Chris Glover: Yesterday, Mackai Bishop Jackson, a 15-year-old boy who lived in Regent Park, was shot and killed. He's the fourth child who has been killed in this city this year. He's the 81st homicide victim in this city. Gun violence has hit epidemic proportions.

For the past six years, I've been meeting with community members. The community members include mothers who have lost their children, and they also include people who have been involved in gun violence in their youth and now are trying to prevent other people from following in their footsteps. They all talk about poverty.

Poverty is the root cause of gun violence. Any step that we take in this Legislature to reduce poverty will ultimately help us to reduce gun violence. There are some steps that I would ask this Legislature to consider. One is increasing the Ontario Works benefit. That needs to go up. If it had kept pace with inflation over the past 20 years, it would now be over \$1,000 for a single person. Instead, it's \$700 per person.

We have people living in destitution because of the policies and legislation that we've passed, or that this House has passed in the past, and we need to address it. If we are committed to ending gun violence, we must first commit to ending poverty in this province.

NORFOLK COUNTY FAIR AND HORSE SHOW

Mr. Toby Barrett: October 2 through Thanksgiving is the Norfolk County Fair and Horse Show, following hard on the heels of the Caledonia Fair, which kicks off tonight, and so many other smaller fairs in our area.

Not only is Norfolk Ontario's oldest agricultural fair, it's ranked as one of the largest in Ontario—up to 160,000 people attend—along with the CNE, the Royal and the Western Fair. Norfolk is ranked in the top 100 festivals and events in Ontario.

The seven-day Norfolk fair dates back to 1840. It kicks off with schools competing for the crown of Young Canada Day, cheerleading, tug-of-war, road races, home crafts, art—all part of a day to create so many memories for many generations. Throughout the week, younger students take part in what's called Discover Agriculture Passport, touring the livestock and the poultry barns. They learn the fun answers to questions like, "Do chickens lay blue eggs?" and "How do pigs keep cool?" Of course, horses large and small are showing, jumping and racing down at the track. The evenings round out with tractor pulls, demolition derbies, monster trucks and country music, big time, this year: George Canyon, Aaron Pritchett, the Hunter Brothers, Emerson Drive.

Saturday is Warriors' Day. I invite all to try and get down to Caledonia tonight and, through the weekend, to Norfolk Fair and take part in some true country and county hospitality.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mrs. Daisy Wai: As an immigrant who was born in Hong Kong, it is my pleasure to rise in the House to announce the upcoming 69th National Day of the People's Republic of China on October 1. I had the pleasure of attending a special reception last month, to welcome the new consul general, Han Tao. We would like to thank and acknowledge the former consul general, Mr. He Wei, for his service.

Tomorrow evening, I have the honour of having the consul general host and celebrate the 69th anniversary gala in my riding of Richmond Hill. Dignitaries from all three levels of government will come together to celebrate.

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China 69 years ago, China is now one of the world's leading trade partners. In 2017, two-way trade between Ontario and China totalled over \$46 billion. As Ontario is developing new global markets and drawing new businesses to Ontario, China will be an important market.

On October 1, on Monday, the Confederation of Toronto Chinese Organizations will host a flag-raising ceremony with the provincial government and the consul general. We'll be having it at the south lawn of the main legislative building at Queen's Park at noon. I encourage all members to attend. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We want—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. That concludes our time for members' statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CANNABIS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE CANNABIS

Ms. Mulroney moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 36, An Act to enact a new Act and make amendments to various other Acts respecting the use and sale of cannabis and vapour products in Ontario / Projet de loi 36, Loi édictant une nouvelle loi et modifiant diverses autres lois en ce qui concerne l'utilisation et la vente de cannabis et de produits de vapotage en Ontario.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the Attorney General like to offer an explanation of her bill?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House today to introduce the Cannabis Statute Law Amendment Act, 2018. This act adds certainty to our plan to protect Ontario's children and youth, keep roads safe and combat the illegal market as the federal government's legalization of cannabis approaches.

1320

The Cannabis Statute Law Amendment Act, 2018, would put in place a strict licensing and regulatory framework for private cannabis retail stores to be launched by April 1, 2019.

Monsieur le Président, la Loi de 2018 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne le cannabis établira un régime rigoureux de délivrance de licences et de réglementation, en vue de l'ouverture de magasins privés de vente au détail de cannabis d'ici le 1 avril 2019.

CRYSTAL-KIRKLAND MINES, LIMITED ACT, 2018

Mr. Vanthof moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr1, An Act to revive Crystal-Kirkland Mines, Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

GENDER EQUALITY WEEK

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: It's a great opportunity to rise today for my first ministerial statement as women's minister in support of Gender Equality Week.

As someone who has stood in this Assembly for five terms and 12 years, I've watched the Legislature grow—sometimes slowly—over the years. Also over the years we've gradually seen more and more women seek elected office and return to this assembly. Today we have a record number of women sitting in this assembly.

This assembly, of course, has a tradition dating back well over 225 years. Yet most women in Canada only secured the right to vote a hundred years ago. For our Indigenous sisters it was much later. We have a ways to catch up and bring parity to this assembly so that there will be, in fact, gender parity in Ontario's provincial Parliament someday.

I've often said, however, that the best social circumstances are when women are part of the workforce and part of our political discourse. As women's minister, I want to build on the work that I was able to do in my career to encourage more and more women to seek office and to seek leadership positions.

The House might like to be reminded that over a decade ago this assembly was the first in Canada to start talking about being family-friendly—or, as Equal Voice likes to call it, “liveable Legislatures.” In fact, I started that conversation as a new mom who arrived here with an infant. Members might also want to know that when I first arrived here we would sit from 1 until midnight. We had no high chairs or change tables in the dining room.

The face of Ontario really wasn't adequately represented in this House. The member from Oshawa in the official opposition once said—and I remember it fondly—that some had blazed a trail but that it was up to us to widen it. In my small way, because of my infant daughter at the time, I was able to widen that trail. Today our sitting hours are 9 to 6, with some notable exceptions. Change tables are available and the dining room has high chairs. As simple as that all might sound, Speaker, it did require all-party support.

What I'm also proud of today is that the little baby who once inspired change in this Assembly, and who learned to walk in the hallways of this esteemed Legislature, is now today 13 years old and is standing in this House right now as a legislative page. Interestingly, enough, however, that program was at one point exclusively male.

While we've made progress, we have much more to do. For Canada's 150th birthday and to commemorate the 100th anniversary of most women securing the right to vote, I had the opportunity to be part of a groundbreaking initiative called Daughters of the Vote. It came from an idea I had while celebrating my own daughter's birthday at the Museum of Nature, which, coincidentally, was where Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden granted women the right to vote while the federal Parliament buildings were being restored after a fire.

Together with Equal Voice, we brought 338 young women from each federal constituency to Ottawa for one moment in time. It was the first in our country's history where every single seat in the House of Commons was occupied by a woman. It was inspiring, and it was a game-changer.

Today those young women have a strong bond, and they will help us in the years to come to reach gender equality in politics and in governance.

But we have much more to do. As Ontario's women's minister, I plan to focus on two areas where I think we can make a difference in getting more women into the workforce and, for those in vulnerable circumstances, back on solid footing.

In order to achieve gender equality, we must have women fully engaged not only in politics but in the labour force. I am wholly committed to working with business leaders across Ontario to engage them in bringing more women into their sectors and into their companies.

One area in particular is in trades. As Ontario moves toward an economy that will eventually see one in five jobs that are trade-related, this is an opportune time for young girls and women to consider a career in the trades. I will be actively seeking opportunities with partners, such as those with the Ontario Home Builders' Association, who I met with last week, to put a plan in place to advance opportunities for more women in the skilled trades.

I will have more to say about this in the weeks ahead, but I believe we have a golden opportunity in this government to create real change in the skilled trades, with women being an important part of that.

The second area we must focus on, to lift women up and have them fully engaged in society as equal partners, is combatting human trafficking and violence against women. This is a serious problem in Ontario, and one I intend to highlight as minister so that Ontarians realize it is happening and will help us to make it unacceptable.

We will not achieve gender equality in our province if we turn a blind eye to the dirty little secrets of sexual abuse and violence against women. Let me be clear: This is much more serious than a hashtag. While #MeToo and #TimesUp are important social movements that have shed light on horrible circumstances women have faced, what is happening to some women across Ontario is sinister.

Not only are these women not equal to men in their lives; they are treated inhumanely in many cases. In the recent coroner's report, just this week, sexual abuse and trafficking of young girls was highlighted in their profiles after they died by suicide. As children's minister, let me be clear: That's unacceptable.

This will be an important opportunity and a priority for me in the work that I do. I plan on building on what the Minister of Labour, Laurie Scott, did in opposition with her legislation, Saving the Girl Next Door Act, combatting human trafficking.

These issues are top of mind to me, particularly as I am also the minister of children and youth and immigration. It is imperative that all girls and women in our society are equal. That includes in their own homes, where they can be free from sexual abuse and violence.

With the help and assistance of all members in this assembly, we can bring more attention to these uncomfortable truths and shift the culture that allows the abuse of women and girls either by family members or by those seeking to traffic them.

This work is important, and it will be among the most valuable work we do together in this Legislature as we strive toward true gender equality in our communities, in the workforce and in this Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Response?

Ms. Suze Morrison: First of all, I want to start by saying thank you to the midwives who are currently demonstrating outside the Legislature right now. Thank you to the Association of Ontario Midwives for being here to celebrate your historic victory for pay equity in Ontario. It was through their hard work, dedication and a fair bit of time in court that they were able to push back against Liberal and Conservative governments of the past and address gender equity pay gaps that exist for midwives.

The court case argued, and won, that midwives are part of a uniquely gendered triecta: They work in a field predominantly staffed by women, that mostly caters to women, and that addresses a health care need associated with women. In fact, the chair of the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, which heard this case, agreed that it's a very apt description and that gender-based discrimination does indeed exist in the field.

It is truly shameful that midwives, who help bring new lives into this world, have had to fight tooth and nail in court to address the fact that their salaries have been stagnant for many decades.

While this is a positive step forward, there is a lot of work left to be done in Ontario. For the sake of everyone living in our great province, we must continue to break down barriers that limit women economically.

1330

Liberal and Conservative governments of this province have failed women over and over and over again, and this government is continuing to fail women.

We know that women are disproportionately affected by poverty. In fact, the Canadian Women's Foundation notes: "Women are more likely to be poor" because they spend more time doing unpaid work, while leaving less time for paid work.

And what does this government do? They cut the promised increase of social assistance rates, mostly leaving women to fend for themselves and their children alone. They cut the Ontario Basic Income Pilot in the middle of the project. And just yesterday, this government promised that they will stop the promised increase of the minimum wage from \$14 to \$15 per hour. This government seems to believe that hard-working Ontarians, hard-working women in fact, do not deserve to make \$15 an hour. Women are disproportionately represented among Ontarians who make minimum wage.

A policy brief from the Wellesley Institute confirms that "minimum wage work is not distributed equally" across the working population. Women, racialized women, and new immigrants are overrepresented.

Women employees are also more likely to be working for minimum wage than men.

Women who are recent immigrants are working for minimum wage at almost three times the rate of the total

population. Racialized women are more likely to work at minimum wage jobs than racialized men.

According to this government, women who work in our communities across Ontario in grocery stores, in hotels, in local restaurants or cafés do not deserve to earn a living wage. In my community in Toronto's downtown east, many women rely on their minimum wage income to put food on their table and to clothe their children. Many women work two and sometimes three jobs just to make ends meet. Many residents in my riding are new immigrants and face even more significant barriers to finding good-paying work.

Our caucus would never put women's well-being in such jeopardy. Women in this province deserve better. They deserve an update and real enforcement of the Pay Equity Act so that women don't make less money than men. Women across this province shouldn't have to take the government to court to get pay equity, like we've seen with the midwives.

They also deserve to have access to affordable public child care so they can return to the workforce after having children, and to receive adequate health care that doesn't involve hospital access through hallway medicine.

But that's not all. Women in this province deserve to see gender-based violence addressed in a serious and systemic way. It exists in homes and in workplaces in our province, and every day that we don't address it is a day that we are failing women. The statistics around gender-based violence are, in fact, truly chilling. According to YWCA Canada, in 2014 in the city of Toronto, 6,028 women reported family violence; 635 reported in Ottawa; 552 in Hamilton; 177 in Kingston; 346 in St. Catharines; 125 in Peterborough; and numerous others across Ontario.

I'm tired of watching us fail women. The women of this province deserve so much better.

PETITIONS

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I have a petition from the people of my riding of York South–Weston, and it relates to "Fund Our Schools."

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

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

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

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

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

I'm supporting this petition and I'm putting my signature to it and giving it to page Katie.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled "Don't Take Away Our \$15 Minimum Wage and Fairer Labour Laws."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

INJURED WORKERS

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I have a petition regarding workers' compensation.

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

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

"Whereas decades of cost-cutting have pushed injured workers into poverty and onto publicly funded social assistance programs, and have gradually curtailed the rights of injured workers;

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

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

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

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

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

I support this. I'm affixing my signature to it and providing it to page Isha.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Ms. Christine Hogarth: "Whereas certain commercial operations known as 'puppy/kitten mills' have been reported to keep animals in precarious conditions in breach of provincial animal welfare laws; and

"Whereas dog/cat breeding in accordance with the law is a legitimate economic activity; and

"Whereas it is the duty of any government to ensure the laws of Canada and Ontario are respected and that the health and well-being of innocent animals is protected;

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

"That the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services work proactively with all amateur and professional dog/cat breeders, as well as consumers, with the intent to tackle confirmed animal cruelty cases in puppy/kitten mills and to educate all stakeholders about animal welfare standards."

I'll affix my name to the bottom and I'll hand it to Vedikaa.

1340

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Wayne Gates: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas for families throughout much of Ontario, owning a home they can afford remains a dream, while renting is painfully expensive;

"Whereas consecutive Conservative and Liberal governments have sat idle, while housing costs spiralled out

of control, speculators made fortunes, and too many families had to put their hopes on hold;

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

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

I agree with this petition and I will sign my name.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

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

“Whereas Ontario is situated on the traditional territory of Indigenous peoples, many who have been on this land for at least 12,000 years;

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

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

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario ... to:

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

“—reinstate the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation;

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

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

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

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

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: I would like to thank Aidan, David and Alicia, who came to visit me in my office for this petition. It’s entitled, “Workers’ Comp is a Right.

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

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

“Whereas decades of cost-cutting have pushed injured workers into poverty and onto publicly funded social assistance programs, and have gradually curtailed the rights of injured workers;

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition and will be affixing my signature to it because I believe workers’ compensation is a right.

CELIAC DISEASE

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: “Whereas the IgA TTG blood screening is the internationally recognized standard as the first step in diagnosing a person with celiac disease;

“Whereas celiac disease is an autoimmune disease that can strike people with a genetic predisposition at any time of life and presents with a large variety of non-specific signs and symptoms;

“Whereas many individuals, such as family members of diagnosed celiacs, are at higher risk and pre-symptomatic screening is advised;

“Whereas covering the cost of the simple test would dramatically reduce wait times to diagnosis, save millions to the health care system due to misdiagnoses, unnecessary testing and serious complications from untreated celiac disease and reduce the painful suffering and health decline of thousands of individuals;

“Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada not to cover this blood test;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario government to cover the cost of the diagnostic blood test (IgA TTG) for celiac disease for those who show symptoms, are a first-degree relative or have an associated condition.”

I am happy to sign this petition and send it down with page Aaliyah.

CURRICULUM

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

“Whereas all students deserve access to comprehensive health and physical education;

“Whereas the current curriculum was created and written by experts in child development and Internet safety, police and social workers in consultation with approximately 4,000 parents;

“Whereas the current curriculum teaches students about a wide range of topics including healthy eating, personal safety and injury protection, substance abuse, addictions and related behaviours, human development and sexual health (‘sex-ed’), and consent;

“Whereas the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 2018 study on sexuality education states that comprehensive health and physical education have positive effects, including ‘increasing young people’s knowledge and improving their attitudes related to sexual and reproductive health behaviours’;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to keep Ontario’s health and physical education curriculum (‘sex-ed’) in its current form.”

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

CURRICULUM

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the health and physical education curriculum empowers young people to make informed decisions about relationships and their bodies;

“Whereas gender-based violence, gender inequality, unintended pregnancies, ‘sexting,’ and HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) pose serious risks to the safety and well-being of young people;

“Whereas one in three women and one in six men experience sexual violence in Canada, and a lack of age-appropriate education about sexual health and healthy relationships leaves children and youth vulnerable to exploitation;

“Whereas one in five parents reported their own child being a victim of cyberbullying; and

“Whereas Doug Ford and the Conservative government is dragging Ontario backward, requiring students to learn an outdated sex ed curriculum that excludes information about consent, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexting, cyberbullying and safe and healthy relationships;

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

I sign this petition and give it to page Will to deliver to the table.

PHARMACARE

Mr. Jeff Burch: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas over 2.2 million Ontarians don’t have ... prescription drug coverage and one in four Ontarians don’t

take their medications as prescribed because they cannot afford the cost;

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

“Whereas Canada urgently needs universal and comprehensive national pharmacare;

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

I will affix my signature and hand it to page Katie.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The time for petitions has expired.

SPECIAL REPORT, AUDITOR GENERAL

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I beg to inform the House that the following document was tabled: a special report entitled Special Audit of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, from the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario.

REPORT, OMBUDSMAN OF ONTARIO

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I beg to inform the House that the following document was also tabled: a report entitled Suspended State, from the Office of the Ombudsman of Ontario.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

ALTERNATE LAND USE AND SERVICES PROGRAM FOR AGRICULTURAL LAND ACT, 2018 LOI DE 2018 SUR UN PROGRAMME DE DIVERSIFICATION DES MODES D’UTILISATION DES TERRES AGRICOLES ET DES SERVICES PRODUITS SUR CES TERRES

Mr. Barrett moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 28, An Act respecting a voluntary program for the alternate use of agricultural land and the production of ecosystem services on that land / Projet de loi 28, Loi concernant un programme volontaire pour la diversification des modes d’utilisation des terres agricoles et la production de services écosystémiques sur ces terres.
1350

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Toby Barrett: This proposed legislation recognizes the right of owners of agricultural land and other land to set aside, voluntarily, any part of that land as fallow for either of the following two purposes: to establish, restore or preserve a natural ecosystem; and to establish and maintain projects that produce services for natural ecosystems.

A prime example would be ALUS Canada. In the members' gallery, I wish to introduce Lara Ellis, who is here with ALUS Canada, as well as a friend of mine, Richard Blyleven with the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario. Many farm and environmental organizations have thrown their support behind this initiative.

As we all know, natural ecosystems are essential for the survival of plants and animals in Ontario, and throughout much of the world natural ecosystems are disappearing. As humans, we have an intimate relationship with the land on which we live and we are bound to the earth. From it, we derive necessities of food, shelter, and clothing. From the materials of the earth, we have always derived, and will continue to derive, the tools and products to maintain our very existence.

This proposed legislation has received letters of support ranging from Delta Waterfowl to the World Wildlife Fund, from the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters to Ontario Nature, the Christian farmers as I had mentioned, the National Farmers Union, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Ontario Home Builders' Association, the Insurance Bureau of Canada, and many organizations in other provinces are behind this kind of a concept.

I certainly wish to say thank you to the MPPs that are present from all parties and who have taken a look at this particular approach to conservation.

Owners of agricultural land and other property owners can truly contribute to the establishment, restoration and preservation of natural ecosystems. This bill is essentially a statement of support for these concepts and principles of setting aside marginal land that recognizes owners of land who wish to support these goals by participating in what is essentially a voluntary, farmer-led, rancher-led, landowner-led, incentive-based program comprising two fronts.

First, they can set aside part of their land for the purpose. For example, they can restore wetlands, reforest, plant windbreaks, install riparian buffer strips, build sustainable drainage systems, create wildlife habitat and establish other ecologically beneficial projects on their property.

Secondly, they can use their land to establish and maintain projects that produce ecosystem services: those services that are things that are produced by healthy, natural ecosystems, on which, again, all living things, whether human, animal or plant life, rely. On the list, obviously, are clean air, clean water, healthy soil, flood mitigation, climate adaptation, phosphorus retention, erosion prevention, carbon dioxide sequestration and, again, wildlife habitat.

Speaker, I've mentioned so many letters that have come in. I'll quote from a letter from Ontario Nature: "Ontario Nature has helped ALUS Canada to grow and expand its programs throughout Ontario since 2009. With the majority of southern Ontario's land base under private ownership, it is critical to engage farmers as conservation partners on the working landscape. We are very supportive of the ALUS program's approach and vision to create a landscape where conservationists, farmers and other stakeholders work collaboratively to conserve our soil, water,

wildlife and other natural resources. The private member's bill, if passed by the Ontario Legislature, will help farmers and landowners to set aside marginal land for conservation purposes. Ontario Nature is very supportive of this initiative."

So, Speaker, if this proposed legislation becomes law, the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry has 12 months to develop a provincial framework and action plan that does things such as the following: provide guidelines on how land can be used for these purposes; provide for the government to put out standardized educational materials; promote research; promote the holding of international symposia; and encourage fundraising.

The minister can amend the provincial framework and action plan to update it as he considers advisable. Speaker, I think that's important. Any legislation such as this has to remain flexible and it has to be up-to-date. We live in obviously rapidly changing times with not only new knowledge but also new understandings of knowledge—whether that knowledge is new or old. Facts are needed to answer questions and develop new approaches to a host of environmental issues that range from soil degradation to loss of diversity to phosphorus loading to changes in climate; hence the importance of on-the-ground experience, evidence-based research and the working together of all concerned to accomplish practical common-sense results. I maintain that government does not have all the answers.

To this end, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters made a proposal in their letter of support:

"The OFAH would also welcome an opportunity to work with the Ministry of Natural Resources ... on the development of a framework and action plan as called for in your bill. Our long history of engagement with MNRF, our experience with an ALUS chapter and the experience and insight of our members and staff well position us to make a contribution to this policy. We would certainly have ideas for education materials and research topics, and are very interested and supportive of the concept of symposia on alternative land uses."

The OFA sent in a similar letter as well, wanting to help out.

I believe that this Ontario legislation can contribute to the underlying principles and objectives of what was the original farmer-driven, duck hunter-driven habitat restoration program, the ALUS program, that was first hatched up in rural Manitoba.

I've got a letter from the World Wildlife Fund:

"Your proposed act promotes a provincial government framework and action plan to help the ALUS and similar programs grow in a collaborative manner with resources for communities and farmers who choose to participate, coming from a mix of government, corporate and philanthropic sources. We believe this is an important strategy to reverse the decline in wildlife habitat while providing improved water quality, mitigating flood and drought, sequestering carbon, and building climate and community resiliency."

As the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario stated in their letter of support and proposal to establish ALUS

programs province-wide, the CFFO believes that ALUS or similar programs are of benefit to most food-growing regions in Ontario. A key initiative of the provincial framework and action plan should include active expansion of the reach of ALUS or similar programs. The CFFO also requests the minister to invest in beneficial linkages between other provincial initiatives, including the greenbelt plan and the natural heritage system, as well as best management practices.

Speaker, in my view, in a crowded world of seven billion people, human activity has significantly degraded our surroundings. Increasingly, we need these kinds of measures. I'll dwell for a moment on floods. Quite recently, the Insurance Bureau of Canada wrote to me. They have issued a report calling for urgent action on flood mitigation. A couple of years ago, the Long Point Region Conservation Authority put forward a very similar presentation. With larger rainfall events that we've been experiencing, the floods—we've certainly seen it in Winnipeg; in Calgary, a few years ago; in High River, Alberta. In New Brunswick, they're regularly subjected to flooded basements.

These floods cost millions of dollars in damage. From 1983 to 2008, the average cost per year in Canada was \$405 million as a result of floods. In the last 10 years, the average is now \$1.8 billion annually. The Insurance Bureau of Canada points to the loss of 72% of wetlands in southern Ontario. Just in August, there was a flash flood in Toronto that resulted in \$80 million in damage to cars and basements—obviously, expensive property costs, and our insurance rates go up as well.

1400

All too often, rules and regulations and more laws and enforcement have been the response from government, with less-than-adequate results. ALUS is a completely different approach, one that is incentive-based. It's voluntary, as I mentioned. It's market-driven. We see it exemplified, for example, in the US Conservation Reserve Program and Britain's Environmental Stewardship Scheme. It was initiated in Manitoba. A thousand miles south as a duck would fly, you would come down to my neck of the woods on the Norfolk Sand Plain. We've run pilot projects, and 10% of the farms in my country are now involved in this program.

ALUS Canada is now a national non-profit charity—ALUS, again, is short for “alternate land use services”—to accomplish some of the measures I've spoken to this afternoon. It provides per acre annual payments to farmers and ranchers, recognizing their dedication to maintaining these kinds of projects on their land. No more than 20% of the farm or ranch's workable land can be enrolled, although exceptions are made.

The money that rolls in is significant. Some of the principal sponsors: of course, the W. Garfield Weston Foundation; and Delta Waterfowl is a foundational partner. Other funders include David Bissett, the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation, the Alberta Real Estate Foundation, Carthy Foundation and Ontario Nature. Support does come from the Ontario government—I know that Trillium put in about \$750 million last fall—and federal and municipal governments.

There are other approaches—the Nature Conservancy of Canada, where land is purchased or donated. Essentially, the principle here is that you don't need to buy the farm, or the ranch, or the property; you offer incentives to the landowner. They set aside maybe that one wet corner that doesn't grow crops very well anyway and stop disking under those cattails. I admit, as a farmer, I have disked under cattails in dry seasons; I'm sure Mr. Vanthof has done the same thing. If you don't disk them under, the ducks come back, the butterflies come—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in the House. I particularly like Thursday afternoons because we talk about bills that might not be on the government's agenda but are on the agenda of various sectors or the agenda of people who represent their ridings.

The member from—is it still Haldimand–Norfolk? Off the top, I'd like to say that we are supportive of this bill. We have some comments and questions that we think should be discussed as part of this bill as it goes to committee. But the basic concept, that there is agricultural land in this province that would be better off and provide more benefit to the environment and, quite frankly, to the economy of the province, if it was set aside—we fully agree.

I'll give a personal example. As many of you know, I'm a farmer. On my farm—it's not my farm anymore; that part of the land, I sold. But when the farm was cleared—back then it was horses still. There was a field of about 10 acres. It basically had four watercourses running through it. In the old days, that was four separate fields, and modern agriculture isn't conducive to four separate fields.

At that point, there was a program. It wasn't provided by a private foundation; it was provided through a government program. I think that's perhaps where we differ. We agree that private foundations can help and private funders can help, but not every part of the province is going to be able to access private funders. But in that case, the provincial government had a program. Part of the problem with that field was that when you tried to work it the way you had to work it with modern equipment, you created erosion. We had the equipment to fill up the erosion every time we worked it, regardless—and where I'm from, minimum tillage kind of works, but zero till doesn't work, because our climate is too cold where we are. The ground, if it's covered—black ground heats up faster than covered ground and we'd lose two weeks. So we didn't.

There was a program, and in that field we planted 10,000 trees. Those trees are now 20 years old. Now the local forestry association is using those trees. Because it was a government program, one of the stipulations of the program was that we had to plant trees that were approved by the government, so they knew exactly where those trees came from. It turns out now, 20 years later, that they've figured out that tree seeds from a certain area grow better in their home area than if you import spruce seed from 2,000 miles away. So all of a sudden, it's really important to have 10,000 trees that are 20 years old that you know exactly where they came from, because the seeds from

those cones are the best ones for foresters in our area to use.

So I got a call. It's right on Highway 11. They see this lovely stand of trees, and they wanted to know—I told them the program. I no longer own that field, but now they're working with the person who owns that farm, and there are actually going to be seeds that are planted in other areas. We have a lot of forestry in my region. So that's an example. It works.

The member talked about the floods. We are having a changing climate. I think the government needs to take a serious look at—they didn't like the cap-and-trade system and are getting rid of the cap-and-trade system. But they need to take a serious look at funding programs like this on a much bigger basis than what the private sector is going to do, because we have a big problem coming. If we could do things like take land out of production that, quite frankly, shouldn't be in production, if we could have bigger buffers along fields—there are an awful lot of things we could do across the province, more than what the private sector is going to do.

I know that where I come from in northern Ontario, it's not as easy to get private sector funding to do things like that as it is in other parts of the province. So I personally don't think that coming up with a programming model that is publicly funded but carefully funded and very targeted to actually provide the results that we are going to need if we're going to combat the things we're facing—I don't think it's beyond the pale to actually talk about publicly funding that program.

The principles are there, the ALUS principles; we understand that. Something else that—and perhaps you don't see it in the rest of the province as much as in my area. I live just around the area of New Liskeard, the Little Clay Belt, and the Little Clay Belt is pretty well developed, agriculturally. You come over a big hill—I love to talk about this hill. You've basically been driving through Canadian Shield since before Huntsville, you come over this big hill, and all of a sudden the land totally changes and it's all agriculture.

Because of where we are, we have to have a lot of tile drainage. People don't like to talk about it, but we have a lot of erosion, too, where those tile drains come out. This program, a government program to actually fund better areas for the drainage—we had a municipal drain program, but a lot of people don't know that it doesn't really qualify in unorganized townships. So the township does a great job, then it goes into unorganized territory—which is something a lot of people don't understand, but anyway—and then all rules are off. We have huge erosion problems.

But now, in the Great Clay Belt, we are clearing land like crazy. For every acre that's paved over in southern Ontario—which is also a big mistake. They're promoting agriculture in southern Ontario. I'm a big promoter. I made my living farming in northern Ontario. It's a great place to farm. But not every acre in northern Ontario should be cleared. By the same token, it's very important to reclaim agricultural land that shouldn't have been cleared, that isn't viable anymore.

1410

We also have to have some kind of rules-based system. Perhaps that exists in southern Ontario—I don't know—but we don't have conservation authorities either. While you're looking at protecting land and reclaiming land, you should also have some kind of rules to say, "No. You know what? The reason that that farm hasn't been cleared in the last 100 years is because that one's not viable to farm." You might be able to convince your investors that it's viable to farm, but local farmers will tell you, because that farm has been for sale for a long time. We need to really look at this.

I commend the member for coming back to this issue and continuing to push this issue; I really do. The member and I, I think, agree on many issues. I think we fundamentally disagree about the role of government in this. I'm willing to listen to his argument. Hopefully he's willing to listen to mine, if this goes to committee. The Conservative philosophy is that the private sector is always better and only the private sector should be able to fund this, and I question that, because this is the public good. There should be a mechanism where, if it's a public good, the public should be part of the rules, as well, but also should be part of the financing of the project. That way, if it's the public good, then it will be done universally across the province. That's an issue, because things aren't done the same way across the province.

If we're really serious about this issue—I believe the member is. I've worked a lot with the member. I have a lot of respect for him. If we're really serious about this issue, we have to be serious about where the financing comes from. When you're talking about floods and you're talking about phosphorus loading and you're talking about a lot of the things—serious erosion problems—and you know those are existing, you can't just say, "Well, we're going to talk to the farmers, and hopefully we can find somebody to fund this." That's not how it works.

As a farmer, I planted those trees. I'm going to speak as a farmer and not as a politician. I try to do that all the time, but I'm really going to try this time. If there wasn't a program to plant those trees, quite frankly—at that point, I didn't have much money; I was just starting—would I have gone to the bank to borrow \$10,000 to plant 10,000 trees for the good of society? No, I wouldn't, and very few farmers can afford to. Very few businessmen can afford it. There are some. Farmers aren't cruel-hearted people. Small business people and big business people aren't cruel-hearted people, but not everyone at every stage has the money to throw around. At that time, I would be better off putting a better milking system in my barn or paying off a piece of my mortgage.

When there was that government program that actually worked for that chunk of land and actually stopped those erosion problems, I lost the use of that land. I didn't get paid for the land. That government program paid for the trees. Part of that deal was that myself or any subsequent owner could not touch that piece of land for, I believe it was, 20 years. It could be 15 or 20; I don't remember. The land stayed yours; you didn't give up your deed; but you

couldn't touch it. As a result, if you go past between Earlton and Englehart, there is a beautiful stand of spruce trees on the right side of Highway 11, and they were financed through the Ministry of Natural Resources. They stop erosion, they provide habitat, and now they're providing seeds for the future, but they were financed by the province. I don't think I would have been able to get that financing anywhere else.

So we are going to vote in favour. We hope this bill goes to committee and we hope we have a real discussion on how to tackle the problems we actually face in agriculture and also the benefits we can provide not only to the economy but to the environment by actually looking at this and taking it seriously. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I'm pleased to speak to the private member's bill proposed by my fellow colleague the member for Haldimand-Norfolk and PA for the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

As the member for Barrie-Innisfil and as the PA for environment, parks and conservation, I'm very supportive of my colleague's private member's bill. As he has stated, it's the farmers' conservation program. That's what we want to bring it down to. We want to listen to the people of Ontario, the people like our farmers here in Ontario. It's time to put them back into the driver's seat, getting big government out of the way.

I think farmers know how to plow best, not big government. I have seen it first-hand as a passenger on a tractor with one of my local farmers. No, I personally was not in the driver's seat, but I was beside one of our fellow farmers as they were plowing their fields in my riding of Barrie-Innisfil. This is a good example of the fact that the economy and the environment can go hand in hand. It's basic supply and demand.

This private member's bill does a great job of linking the demands of society and farmers who supply the environmental services with something few programs in this country do: It links both the environment and the economy. Most importantly, Madam Speaker, it's voluntary. It's farmer-led. It's a program, an incentive, that is based on rewarding property owners for maintaining, creating and enhancing environmental benefits. Finally they can take the environment in their own hands, show initiative and be rewarded for it and not punished for it. Why? Because our government believes in empowering the people, empowering our farmers to be able to do such things.

MP Bob Sopuck, in his former role with Delta Waterfowl, stated, "A market-friendly environmental philosophy emphasizes results, not process. Activists love the current bureaucratic style of endless hearings based on ridiculously broad terms of reference and the free media coverage they generate."

Well, Madam Speaker, we have great news. We have a program that's actually going to be empowering our farmers and letting them take the environment into their hands. It empowers agricultural producers and rural communities so they can be stewards of our environment. It enlists

farmers in Ontario so they can help out their communities and maintain the right balance. As our Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks said on Monday, it maintains the right balance between a healthy, clean environment and a vibrant, competitive economy that creates opportunity for all citizens.

This is an example of something that creates opportunities for all citizens and our farmers. It has the support of so many organizations; over 18 letters of support for this private member's bill, I think, speaks volumes.

And we've seen that it works. It not only works here in Canada, in other provinces, but it also works in Europe; it also works in the United States. It's a proven, fact-based policy.

As the member who introduced this bill has said, far too often we have government responding with rules and regulations, and it has very little response, rather than giving people the ability to take the environment into their own hands and provide the resilience and mitigation that we need in our environment.

Another proven fact is that, as the PA for environment, we have this species-at-risk committee. The species-at-risk committee is actually very supportive of such initiatives. In fact, in a report they have done about their safe harbour habitat work, they stated: "The objective of safe harbour is to encourage voluntary stewardship initiatives" that are beneficial to protect positive outcomes for conservation and outcomes for species at risk. What it does is it helps landowners who can participate in the safe harbour habitat initiative by taking actions to create or enhance habitat for species at risk for specific periods of time, while being assured that future land use activities will not be restricted under the ESA.

1420

"The concept of safe harbour habitat under the ESA is a reflection of the" meaningful "role that private landowners play in the protection and recovery of species at risk." Madam Speaker, this is from the species-at-risk committee, who are very supportive of such initiatives.

I think it's very important to highlight the record amount of support that this private member's bill has had. We have members opposite that have spoken in favour of this bill as well. It really is a bipartisan issue, because I think, as Ontarians, we all deserve a healthy, clean environment, which is the cornerstone of the quality of life that so many people in Ontario enjoy. We rely upon the clean air we breathe. We rely upon safe drinking water when we turn on the tap. We rely upon protected lands, parks, green spaces and a wide range of activities, including recreation and growing our food.

I am proud to stand up today in support of this private member's bill, which really will empower our farmers to be the stewards of environmental protection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I would like to start by commending the member from Haldimand-Norfolk for introducing his private member's bill that rightfully recognizes the need to protect our rural land.

In fact, the member has always been a champion for agriculture and rural Ontario. Speaker, you might not know that the member from Haldimand–Norfolk still lives on his family farm and is a former teacher of agriculture and environmental science. His family joined the Norfolk Co-op in 1918, and the Federation of Agriculture in the 1950s. With such a rich history of farming in rural Ontario, few people understand what we need to do more for these communities than the member himself.

Like the member, I have a personal background in agriculture. I grew up on a farm and was a part-time live-stock trucker. I worked for several agricultural-based companies. I am also a proud graduate of the Ridgetown College of Agricultural Technology, so I am keen to speak on a bill that will have an impact on agricultural land and rural communities.

Specifically, this bill sheds light on the environmental concerns for the agricultural sector across rural Ontario. By recognizing the right of farmers and rural landowners to set aside land as fallow to establish, restore or preserve a natural ecosystem, this government would build on some of the important work we are already doing to support our farmers and protect their land.

We know farmers are some of the best environmental stewards in the province, because if they don't take care of the land, they won't have a successful business. That is why Ontario is so dedicated to the stewardship programming we provide under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership. These programs allow farmers to adopt best management practices that enhance water quality and soil health. Examples of these include the use of buffer strips, wind-breaks and cover crops to ensure we are protecting our agricultural land and the surrounding ecosystem.

One project in particular, through the leadership of the Rural Ontario Institute, launched the Ontario Soil Network, a 10-month leadership and communication course for 25 farmers in southwestern Ontario who have implemented best management practices on their farms. The pilot project trained, supported and inspired innovators to become effective soil health influencers in their community. They host education events and mentor other farmers who are looking to take the first steps toward soil health and ecosystem protection with an agricultural lens.

Building on these practices, Ontario has developed a long-term soil strategy, in collaboration with our agricultural sector, that will foster soil health and conservation efforts through to 2030. These are just some examples of our government's support for addressing environmental concerns in agriculture in rural Ontario.

What's best about these supports is that they were developed by our private sector partners. They leverage the expertise of our farmers and agricultural leaders to make sure the programs are right for them. By working together, we can find solutions that will achieve our environmental goals, while allowing farmers to farm and rural residents to enjoy the use of their property.

As promised, we're committed to listening to the people of Ontario, and that includes rural Ontario. Under

the previous government, rural Ontario was an after-thought for far too long. This bill gives an opportunity for rural land in Ontario to host international symposia, for harvesting knowledge and for promoting farmers and rural landowners across the province.

It is fitting that I am speaking today about more ways our government is looking to recognize our farmers and rural communities. That's because we've been busy this week preparing for Ontario Agriculture Week—a week-long celebration of our farmers, food processors and agricultural organizations dedicated to getting Ontario food from farm gate to the dinner plate. From October 1 to 7, I hope all members will be inspired to support our agriculture and agri-food sector as much as we can. We are encouraging all Ontarians to visit the farms and farmers' markets in their communities to buy local fruits and vegetables for their kids' lunches and for Thanksgiving dinners, and to thank their farmers, producers and agri-businesses for the work they do in bringing us a bountiful harvest.

Farmers are the original stewards of the land. They are not interested in damaging the very earth that allows them to make a living. With the bill introduced by the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, farmers will have more tools at their disposal to protect the land and feed our cities.

As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, I understand the need to support our farmers and rural landowners in protecting our agricultural land. With this bill, put forward under the ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, farmers in rural Ontario can be sure they have champions across this government.

At last, rural Ontarians can be sure: We aren't just in their corner; we're protecting their corner and we're promoting their business.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm pleased to rise in support of Bill 28, an act to support farmers, who, as stewards of our land and water, use their land to provide ecosystem services that benefit everyone in Ontario.

As many of you know, I grew up on a farm. My parents taught me the importance of caring for the land and protecting the water, especially the creek that ran through our farm and the aquifer that supplied the drinking water for many of the communities in our region. They taught me the importance of stewardship that benefits present and further generations.

I want to thank the member from Haldimand–Norfolk for bringing this bill forward and recognizing the important role that farmers play in providing environmental goods and services for the people of Ontario—services such as wetland restoration, wildlife habitat, riparian buffer zones to protect creeks and rivers, wood lots, pollinator habitat, sustainable draining systems to protect our aquifers, carbon storage to promote soil health and help us combat climate change, and many other services that benefit the people of Ontario.

Research shows that the greenbelt alone provides \$85 billion worth of environmental goods and services for the people of Ontario. Imagine the ecosystem benefits that farmers can provide across Ontario if we can provide them with more support to do that. It benefits our economy, it benefits our environment and it benefits our communities.

So in addition to growing food, farmers play a critically important role in protecting our water, improving our health, sustaining our environment, protecting habitat and species, and helping us combat and adapt to climate change. They do all of this without a lot of recognition or compensation.

I believe, deeply, that farmers deserve to be recognized, supported and compensated for the environmental goods and services they provide the people of Ontario. This bill provides the foundation for a voluntary, farmer-led framework, built on the award-winning alternative land use services program.

I want to just take a moment to give a shout-out to the farmers who have developed the ALUS program. It started in 2006 in Manitoba, and it came to Ontario about a decade ago. I've had the honour of spending some time on one of the ALUS farms in the member's riding, in Haldimand-Norfolk. Bryan and Cathy Gilvesy of Y U Ranch: About 10 years ago—and they were one of the first farms to adopt the ALUS program—I had a chance to spend some time on their farm. I can tell you, it is one of the most sustainable farms I've ever visited. Bryan and Cathy tell me that part of the inspiration for creating such a sustainable farm was the ALUS program, the fact that it was farmer-led in partnership with conservationists, developing and designing programs by farmers, for farmers and led by farmers, but providing benefits for everybody in Ontario.

1430

One of the reasons why I love this program so much is that it provides an opportunity for farmers to be recognized, rewarded and ultimately compensated for providing those benefits. When I toured the Gilvesy farm 10 years ago, the Minister of Agriculture for Prince Edward Island was there that day. He was so impressed with what he saw on their farm that he went back to PEI, and the PEI government adopted the ALUS program and have now spread it across their province. It provided a program to compensate farmers for the environmental goods and services from the programs that they had designed and led.

My hope is that this Legislature will pass Bill 28 and it will provide the foundation for us to spread the ALUS concept across Ontario and finally provide farmers with the recognition, the rewards, the compensation and the support they deserve for being such leaders in such a forward-thinking stewardship program.

I want to thank the member opposite for bringing this forward and let you know you have my full support.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I just want to briefly say I think this is a fabulous concept. I'm happy to support Bill 28 primarily because it shows very clearly that we do not have to have a "them" and "us." It does not have to be about

agriculture fighting against the conservation movement or the environmental movement. I personally believe that farmers have always been environmental leaders, and this program is a beautiful example of that.

I'm happy to lend my support.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The member for Haldimand-Norfolk has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you to all present. The opposition member for Timiskaming-Cochrane is truly blessed with an area of trees and a natural environment. He has planted a number of trees. I know on our farms, we've put in 200 acres of trees, and now I have to look at tall-grass prairie and putting in strawberries and other types of environmentally friendly plants.

The member from Barrie-Innisfil, PA to environment: I was very pleased she mentioned the many years of work by MP Bob Sopuck. He was involved from the beginning. His emphasis was on results, not process, not just regulation and enforcement.

Our MPP from Perth Wellington, PA to OMAFRA, stressed CAP, the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, and the best management practices fostered there—again, an example of government money going into these good purposes. He made mention of how the Rural Ontario Institute has an Ontario soil health network amongst farmers.

Our MPP from Guelph, the Green Party—very pleased he was able to speak to this. It reinforces, in his words, that this bill provides a foundation to continue to enhance the award-winning alternate land use services program. He made mention of my friend Bryan Gilvesy, and Cathy Gilvesy. They run grass-fed longhorn cattle at the Y U Ranch—so many great projects out there. I think I mentioned I see them on some of our family land—not my own farm; it would be a conflict. It's amazing. It's a miracle. It truly brings back the flowers, the dragonflies, the ducks and the turtles.

As the minister just mentioned, agriculture does not need to fight conservation—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Jeff Burch: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should provide a firm funding commitment and a clear timeline for the delivery of year-round GO Transit rail service serving all stops between Niagara Falls and Toronto, with a final project delivery deadline of no later than 2023, a project that will create jobs, connect Niagara to vital GTHA transit hubs, decrease traffic congestion and grow the local economy.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Mr. Burch has moved private member's notice of motion number 15. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Jeff Burch: Thank you, Speaker. It's a privilege to rise today to advocate for my first private member's motion. Given recent events and comments, I felt I needed to use this opportunity to clarify the government's commitment to Niagara GO.

GO Transit is a substantial issue in Niagara. It crosses party and ideological lines. Since 2008, local governments across Niagara have been advocating for all-day GO Transit rail service. The St. Catharines mayor at the time, Brian McMullan, even bet his council \$1,000 that they would have it by 2009. It's clear he lost that bet. This has been a common theme in Niagara. Many times we've been promised and expected that Niagara all-day GO was just around the corner.

In 2015, Ontario transportation minister Steven Del Duca, MPP Jim Bradley, Niagara regional chair Al Caslin, the St. Catharines mayor and the Niagara Falls mayor met to discuss the business plan on expanding GO Transit rail service to Grimsby, St. Catharines and Niagara Falls. Shortly thereafter, it was announced that all-day GO Transit rail service would be operational in Grimsby by 2021 and in Niagara Falls by 2023.

I want to point out that my friend from Niagara Falls has been fighting for GO train service to his riding for quite some time, as has my friend from St. Catharines as a city councillor for 15 years. My friend from Niagara Falls asked for a commitment to have all-day GO in 2015. He asked again for a firm timeline in 2016. For over two years, he pressed this issue in this Legislature and in the community, and you'll hear from him again shortly.

The future of GO Transit in Niagara is unclear. As we all understand, the previous government was voted out and we're awaiting clarity from this government. During the election, the now Premier stated that there was no firm plan to honour the commitment from the Liberals to deliver GO train service to Niagara by 2023.

Following significant pushback from the community, the member from Niagara West clarified the Premier's comments, stating, "The PCs are 100% behind bringing the GO train to Niagara." At the time, this was great news. All-party support for the expansion was secured, and I thank the member for his commitment.

I believe we have four representatives from both political parties representing all four ridings in Niagara who understand the need for GO in Niagara. This July, I asked the Premier to commit to a firm timeline for the expansion of the service. The Minister of Transportation responded:

"The Premier has made it clear: We're going to expand GO rail throughout this province, including all-day, two-way service to Bowmanville, Kitchener and Niagara. It's clear, and we've made it clear, that Premier Ford will be known as the transit Premier.

"We recognize the challenge of moving people in this province is one that hamstring our economy. So we're going to make sure that we move people more efficiently and we move goods more efficiently. One of the keys to an expanding, growing and flourishing economy is our ability to move people along on their daily commute.

"So to the member: You can relax." I'm not told very often to relax, but thank you to the minister. "We are committed to expanding the GO to Niagara. You can count on it."

I was almost happy with that, but the minister did not mention timelines. He did not answer my question as to when and if.

While I appreciate this government's verbal commitment, the people of Niagara need more. A verbal commitment is subject to change, as we've learned. We need action and a firm timeline.

Last week, this government announced GO train expansions. Niagara was notably absent in the announcement. We see new trips on Lakeshore East between Oshawa and Toronto's Union Station; 17 new weekday trips were being added to Lakeshore West. This does demonstrate that the government is committed to transit. My concern and the concern of my fellow MPPs in Niagara is that we have no firm commitment on the expansion to Niagara. We have no timeline.

1440

Communities in Niagara are united in their support of all-day transit from Hamilton to Niagara Falls. People in Niagara deserve faster commutes and to be connected to opportunities, whether that be a great job, quality education or entertainment.

Speaker, as I understand that I am advocating for support of this motion from members of the self-proclaimed party of business, I wanted to touch on the business case for providing timely weekday GO train service between Niagara and the GTHA.

Firstly, there is a demonstrable demand for the service. That was evident in 2008, 2015, during the election, and today. As it currently stands, there's no direct transit service that connects Niagara to the GTHA, despite the fact that over half of all inter-regional trips to Niagara are destined for Hamilton. This demand is displayed by the increase in GO bus ridership, which grew from 430 passengers per day to 1,200 passengers per day, which led to an increase in the frequency that the bus services provided.

Economic prosperity is intrinsically tied to transit and transportation. It has been observed that where GO Transit goes, communities grow.

Niagara is home to countless markets, most notably our agricultural sector and the natural wonder that is the Niagara Falls. As I'm sure the member can attest, Niagara Falls is one of the most prominent tourist destinations in the world. Providing the seamless connection from Niagara Falls to the GTHA allows for easier transportation for tourists visiting at either destination.

In January, the National Bank released a study that said that Niagara had the second-strongest economic momentum in Canada. This was driven primarily by soaring housing prices and investment into non-residential construction. Local politicians attributed at least part of this rating to the announcement that GO Transit was being extended into Niagara.

Connectivity would bring new talent and innovation into the region, and what follows is investment. The business case put forward collaboratively between the Niagara region and its 12 municipalities found that daily GO train rail service would create 2,400 operations jobs, 1,200 construction jobs, and connect those in the GTHA with approximately 12,700 Niagara jobs that have been created in the past few years.

I would just like to read from the executive summary of that business plan, which says:

“While the 2008 economic downturn had a significant impact on Niagara, it was very evident that simply waiting for a positive turnaround was not an option. Niagara’s communities took an aggressive, proactive approach, working with industry stakeholders to identify key sectors that would play a critical role in our region’s economic revitalization.

“While Niagara’s roots are deep in the agricultural, food and advanced manufacturing sectors, today we are gaining significant ground in the health and wellness, interactive digital media and bioscience sectors. Committed to the social, economic and cultural development of our communities, Niagara’s post-secondary education institutions (including Brock University, Niagara College and McMaster University’s DeGroot School of Medicine) are active and engaged partners with local governments and community organizations. Together, those combined efforts are focused on the economic revitalization of the region, co-operatively developing programs to address demands for skilled labour and positioning Niagara in the global marketplace for talent.

“Traditionally, our workforce has been primarily local; today, Niagara is attracting talent from beyond our borders. Niagara’s connectivity to the GO rail network has the potential to attract a much wider net of potential employees to Niagara businesses which can incentivize more businesses to locate in the region knowing that a significant cache of skilled labour is only a short train ride away.

“For Niagara, GO trains will be an economic ‘game-changer’; the catalyst to realize our plans for economic prosperity. Together with our post-secondary institutions and industry representatives, we have charted out and embarked on an ambitious joint economic development action plan for Niagara’s success.... GO train expansion to Niagara is a critical component of these efforts.”

Transit expansion is clearly the solution to many of the economic problems that plague Ontario. We have issues of gridlock and very long commutes. As I’m sure many members in this House can attest from their own commutes to this House, it is taking longer and longer to get into Toronto. A GO Transit line that connects Grimsby, St. Catharines and Niagara Falls to the already established lines of the GTHA will undoubtedly provide relief. Transitioning people away from our highways and onto public transit provides environmental benefits that will long outlast the initial cost of expanding GO to Niagara.

It’s clear why my constituents and constituents across Niagara are so passionate about getting all-day GO Transit to Niagara. The evidence cannot be ignored. As I mentioned earlier, every single municipality in Niagara supports this expansion. The Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce outlined the importance of Niagara GO, stating:

“To strengthen business competitiveness, the GNCC encourages the next government of Ontario to ... commit to funding daily year-round GO train service to Niagara and a single public transit system for the Niagara region.

“The economic benefits of GO train service include 2,400 new full-time jobs in Niagara, 1,200 additional construction jobs, and \$195 million in economic impact for a total estimated cost of \$130 million. The government of Ontario has also committed \$67 million over 10 years for transit in Niagara, along with \$81.3 million in federal funding.... The next government of Ontario should deliver on these commitments.”

Beyond politicians, the expansion has been supported by Metrolinx, and I know my friend from Niagara West has met with them recently.

To review, since 2008, GO Transit has been identified as a major priority for St. Catharines and the region. The member from Niagara Falls pressed this issue for two years, and by 2015, all levels of government met to discuss the completed business plan to expand GO rail service to Grimsby—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It’s always a pleasure to be able to rise in the House and speak on behalf of the fine constituents of Niagara West, and in this particular case, to speak to a motion that has been brought forward by the member for Niagara Centre. I want to thank the member for Niagara Centre, as a fairly new member to the Legislature, for making this a priority for himself, because I know it is a priority for the people of Niagara. So thank you for advocating for this.

Let me be very clear, Madam Speaker: Our government is completely committed to bringing the GO train down to Niagara as soon as possible, doing everything in our power to build transit. We’ve heard the Minister of Transportation speak about this. We’ve heard the Minister of Infrastructure speak about this. It’s a clear item within our campaign commitments, our platform for the people, because we understand that it’s necessary to get people moving.

I think when we take a step back—there are a couple of points I want to make. I’m going to be sharing the time with a couple of other members from the area, so I have to be considerate of that.

One of the things we have to be taking a good look at is the former government’s record. We saw the member for St. Catharines—the former member for St. Catharines, not the current member—say that in 2014, he felt the GO train would be to Niagara by 2015. What he did was, unfortunately, place a particular type of timeline that was then broken by that government by multiple, multiple years. That was very disappointing to the constituents not only of Niagara West but the rest of Niagara, who had an expectation from that member, who was at the time a cabinet minister and a revered senior cabinet minister within the Dalton and Wynne governments. He broke that promise. That was very, very disappointing. I’ll tell you one thing our government doesn’t do: We don’t break promises; we keep them.

Interjection: Promise made—

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Promise kept.

Another thing I want to just bring up for a little bit of background into the situation—and I appreciate the

member's speech and his passion about this. But at the same time, he really spoke a lot about the member for Niagara Falls's commitment to this. I recognize that as well, but I think it's important to recognize that we've been advocating for it on this side of the House, as well, whether it was the former member for my riding, Tim Hudak, or myself. My very first letter to the Minister of Finance, when I was first elected in 2016, was asking for the GO train to come to Niagara as one of the top three priorities for our area, including of course my local hospital, the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital.

1450

I want to say that, since being re-elected, myself, the Minister of Transportation and our government have remained committed to bringing the GO down to Niagara as soon as possible and as effectively and efficiently as possible. We have seen the NDP attempt to smear our Premier's intentions. We have seen, again, the NDP attempt to play political games with important issues that impact people's lives, and we saw this also during the campaign. We have made a firm commitment to the taxpayers of not only Niagara but Ontario that we're going to respect tax dollars and that we're going to spend every tax dollar as efficiently and effectively as possible.

The Premier—at the time, the leader of the PC Party—came to Niagara and made a commitment that we're going to make sure the GO train comes to Niagara as effectively and efficiently as possible, to review the Liberal government's numbers—because we've seen the Liberals inflate numbers and we've seen their projects go way over cost and over time and over budget. He made a commitment to make sure that we're doing it as cost-effectively as possible.

The NDP took that, they spun it and they tried to smear our party and the Premier in saying that somehow we were cancelling the GO train to Niagara. I had a lot of confused constituents because of that, but that was a pure, unadulterated level of disrespect, I felt, for our party's commitment to that cause and a political spin that they had to the Premier's comments at that time. So I was very disappointed in that.

Look, our government for the people looks forward to continuing to work with senior leadership at Metrolinx to maintain and improve GO Transit and to make sure that our transit networks best serve Ontarians. We've already seen service coming down in the summer months to Niagara. We want to continue expanding that. We're seeing construction beginning now also on Confederation station in Stoney Creek, beginning that work, moving all the way into Grimsby in my riding, into St. Catharines and into Niagara Falls. We're making sure that as we see this growth occur and as we recognize the importance of public transit in building and growing our economy in Ontario, the people are always respected and taxpayers are always respected. I know that might be a new concept, unfortunately, for the opposition and the now third party—I guess they're not a party, are they?—the former government.

Our Premier's plan for the people included a firm commitment to two-way, all-day GO. I will continue to

fight for this. I thank the member for bringing this up in the Legislature and giving me the opportunity to contribute to debate this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I will say that all three NDP MPPs, Jeff, Jennie and myself, support GO coming all the way to Niagara Falls—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I'm just going to remind members that we refer to other members by ridings or titles, not by names.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you—and Niagara West also.

I want to thank you for allowing me to speak today. Honestly, I'm surprised to be speaking to this topic today. For those watching at home, we've been discussing getting GO trains to come all the way from Toronto to Niagara Falls. The motion says "2023," but as you know, if you've been watching me talk about this issue since 2014, I believe we can actually bring it by 2021, just in time for the Canada Summer Games.

Madam Speaker, I'm surprised to be here today speaking about this because, honestly, I had thought it was already decided. The people of Niagara have been promised a GO train. The business case has been made and the reasoning was clear. So what are we doing here today? Why are we still discussing this for the 88th time? If there is a case that will create jobs, create economic growth and clear up our highways, why can't the PCs support that? Even worse, this is something that's already in the works. This should be an easy vote for them.

Madam Speaker, I spent time talking to mayors in Niagara Falls, Welland and St. Catharines. We have incredible elected officials down there, but I can tell you it's not easy, as the member knows, to get 12 councils and mayors on the same page. But GO train did just that. Everybody in Niagara—the number one ask coming out of Niagara was GO trains to Niagara. The movement came from the grassroots in the community who pushed this issue onto the agenda.

As the PCs may know, the first party—and I think it's very important for the member from Niagara West to listen to this—that came to Niagara to say, "People, we hear you, we support you," was the NDP. It was Andrea Horwath who came to Niagara Falls during a by-election. The reason why I know about the by-election is that I was in it. I ran in the by-election and, I'm happy to say, just like I'm sure the PCs are happy, I won. I just thought I'd throw that out. Our leader came to Niagara and said, "Our caucus is committed to creating jobs and reducing pollution. We're going to clear our highways of congestion and we're going to put people to work doing it." After a massive push, we even got the Liberal government to agree to do it.

Of course, and this is interesting for the member from Niagara West to understand, there is one party that was late to the party. Any guess who that was? Well, I'll help you: It was the PC Party. I'm going to tell you. During my first by-election, the PCs were clear.

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: No, listen to this, because there's history behind it. It's important to know the history. The PCs said no to GO. Even after we brought our message of GO trains to the voters where they elected us and they supported it, the PCs said no to GO.

What happened? Four months later, two things were going to happen in this Legislature: I was going to have the shortest term ever in the history of Ontario politics by a four-month term or I was going to be the shortest MPP in history. I wasn't sure what was going to happen, but it was.

Madam Speaker, it took them a long time to get there, but after saying no to GO for years they finally came on board. We secured a timeline, we secured the funding and we secured a business case. Everything was in place. And then the Premier came and said he would be reviewing it.

This is the history; this is what happened.

The community was enraged. People from every walk of life criticized the Premier for turning his back on the hard work of our community. One of the elected reps is here today, and you know that. We changed the Premier's mind. He understood how hard we worked together—the key word is “together”—on this file, and how important it was, and agreed to stick to the timeline. So why is this coming to a vote? This should be a foregone conclusion. I hope the PCs will use this vote today to reaffirm their support of the Niagara community.

Madam Speaker, we can talk about better things to rehash than this. Instead, let's talk about how we use GO trains coming to create even more good, local, jobs—good-paying local jobs. Let's talk about how we can use this opportunity to use local material, local suppliers and, most importantly, local workers. If we do that, the money for this expansion will go right back into our communities and into our neighbourhoods.

We should always support buying local. These projects should put people in my riding to work. We can do that, and we can do it sooner by bringing GO trains all the way to Niagara Falls by 2021. That should be the priority. I hope the PC government will use their votes today to agree.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Premier Ford was elected on a plan to rebuild Ontario. During the campaign, Premier Ford promised two-way, all-day GO service from Toronto to Niagara Falls. Ontario answered by electing a PC government.

With the announcement of this motion, the NDP are showing their hand. They are telling Ontarians that they are not prepared to govern. The motion presented today by the NDP MPP simply repeats our government's commitment to improving transit in the province. The motion calls on our government to subscribe to an arbitrary timeline. What the NDP fail to understand is that in order to build transit, there are steps that must be taken and a process that must be followed.

Let's first start by saying that our government for the people respects taxpayers. Since June, our government for

the people has conducted a line-by-line audit of government spending to ensure that we are best positioned to deliver transit projects in a cost-effective way. We want to achieve the best value for the customer: the Ontario taxpayer. To invest in the people of Ontario, we will provide transit service that makes sense.

I have reviewed the Liberals' past project proposals, and it's clear that the previous government, like the NDP now, were simply wrong.

1500

On their proposed transit plans, the previous government looked to routes that were already well serviced by other providers, like GO and Via. The Liberals attempted to influence people in Liberal-held ridings with their own money to secure future votes. There are lots of ways to provide transportation service to Ontarians, but promising billions of taxpayer dollars to projects and routes that are already serviced by other providers for political gain just does not make sense, not logistically and certainly not financially.

The Liberals were a tax-and-spend kind of government. Ontario's debt is \$338 billion. The current debt-to-GDP ratio is resting at an uncomfortable 39%, as updated in public accounts last week, from the Liberal government's stated 37.1% in their 2018 budget. Our interest payments on the current debt are now the fourth-largest line item of the provincial budget. In real terms, our total operating expenditures have inflated by 55%, a spending increase of an incredible \$2,226 for every man, woman and child in our province. Had the Liberals held expenditures to population growth, the government of Ontario would have spent \$331 billion less over 15 years. That is an amount almost exactly the same as Ontario's total debt burden.

Your government for the people is not a tax-and-spend government. We are in the business of people. Our commitment to transportation and our dedication to improving transit service will be executed with the support of the people of this province. We look forward to consulting all Ontarians before we build major transit projects. We look forward to respecting the process, to respecting the taxpayer, and we look forward to improving transportation right across Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Ms. Jessica Bell: As a transit rider and as the transit critic for the official opposition, I am proud to be speaking to this motion to introduce all-day, two-way GO service from Toronto to Niagara Falls, with stops in between. I know from personal experience what it's like to rely on transit to get around—to go to work, to pick up kids, to do my shopping and all my errands on transit. I know firsthand what it's like to wait in the cold for a train that is late, to not be able to use the bus to take my kids to school because the bus is too overcrowded to fit strollers, and to leave for work very early because I never know what time the train will arrive.

And I'm not alone. As the executive director of the transit advocacy organization TTCriders, which is what I did before I became the MPP for University–Rosedale, I

heard so many stories from residents and workers from across the GTHA and the region who desperately want an end to the overcrowding, the long wait times, the two-to-three-hour daily commutes and the increasingly high cost of fares. It is time to build an affordable, world-class public transit system across our region and across Ontario.

Providing all-day, two-way GO service from Niagara Falls to Toronto by 2023 is a great way to achieve this transit vision. It will build the local economy and help people get to where they want to go.

I'd like to share three stories from three key leaders about the many values of all-day, two-way GO service. Here's what the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce had to say. They encourage the next government of Ontario to:

“(1) commit to funding daily year-round GO train service to Niagara and a single public transit system for the Niagara region.

“The economic benefits of GO train service include 2,400 new full-time jobs in Niagara, 1,200 additional construction jobs, and \$195 million in economic” benefits. It “will be a major boost not only for business but for poverty reduction and standards of living.”

That's the Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce.

Here's what the NDP MPP for St. Catharines has been hearing from her constituents. Jennie Stevens has been working tirelessly with local residents to bring year-round GO service to Niagara since the issue was first discussed while she was a city councillor. Jennie said that residents and business owners have spoken to her about the need to connect St. Catharines with the economies of the Golden Horseshoe region.

Improving the transit link between Niagara and the GTHA will help workers who struggle to commute back and forth along the QEW, increasing congestion and delays. It will help family members trying to visit their kids at Brock University or Niagara College. And it is essential for families and businesses across St. Catharines.

Even some of your own members are on board. The PC MPP for Niagara West–Glanbrook said, on April 6, 2018, “The PCs are 100% behind bringing the GO train to Niagara.”

Hon. Sylvia Jones: He just said it a few minutes ago.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Yes, and I am repeating it because it is such a good thing to say. Thank you, member from Niagara West–Glanbrook. We're looking forward to seeing your support for this bill.

Interjections.

Ms. Jessica Bell: We're trying.

The evidence is in; the need is clear. It's time to move forward with sensible, evidence-based transit projects that will help people in the Niagara region get to jobs and travel.

Niagara residents were promised all-day, two-way GO service by the Wynne government back in 2016, so they've already been waiting for a while. Del Duca, the transportation minister, said that Grimsby would have all-day, two-way GO service by 2021 and Niagara Falls would have all-day, two-way GO by 2023. Now the onus

is on you, this government, to deliver on this important transit project. The question is: Will you?

I have deep concerns about this government's commitment to transit projects. Instead of fixing our transit woes, this government, I fear, is taking us from bad to worse. Instead of committing to improved service and following through on commitments to expand transit, this Premier is making it clear that every transit project is in jeopardy. You've refused to confirm all-day, two-way GO service to not just Niagara, but also Hamilton and Kitchener. You've refused to confirm that you're going to move forward with building the Finch West LRT, even though millions have already been sunk into that project and there is a clear need and demand. You're rolling back on the commitment to have \$3 GO fares within the city of Toronto so commuters here have more options to travel around our city, which is being crippled by congestion. And you've refused to commit to fairly fund local transit systems across Ontario so that we can have immediate service improvements across our province. Instead, what we are hearing are more pie-in-the-sky initiatives, such as building subways to Pickering, even though there already is a GO line travelling to that area.

It is not the time to brag; it's the time to build. Bringing all-day, two-way GO service to Niagara Falls is a sensible, practical, affordable transit project that will help the Niagara region. It's going to help tourism, it's going to provide jobs, it's going to help commuters get around, it's going to help the local economy and it's going to help residents.

Get it done. Vote for this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Dave Smith): Further debate?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to see you in the chair.

I'd like to thank the member for Niagara Centre for raising this important issue of transit in the Legislature. I'll be speaking on two aspects of the issue: making life easier and economic development.

We have repeatedly said that this government is committed to making life easier for all Ontarians. We look forward to improving the transit experience across the province to bring relief to commuters. We'll do this by (1) enhancing scheduling; (2) building transit faster; and (3) eliminating inefficiencies.

Just last week, our Minister of Transportation, John Yakabuski, announced the largest GO train service increase in five years. This added 200 trips on the GO Lakeshore corridors, some of the most heavily travelled tracks in the GO Transit network. That's 400,000 more riders in seats each week. That's a total service increase of 21%.

Not only do we need to enhance our service scheduling, but we need to build transit faster. Our government for the people is best positioned to build and maintain transit infrastructure in order to best serve Ontarians.

1510

A final point in our commitment to making life easier for Ontarians is eliminating inefficiencies. Our government will not waste Ontarians' time. We will certainly not waste resources. We are committed to enhancing

scheduling, building transit faster and eliminating inefficiencies. Our government is making life easier for the people of Ontario. We are doing so in a financially responsible manner so that we can all get ahead.

Our government for the people recognizes that improving public transit to better serve those who travel within the GTA is vital to our province's economic development. Traffic congestion in the GTA costs billions of dollars in lost productivity each year. Getting people moving will not only save Ontarians time, it will strengthen our economy.

We want to provide faster and more reliable service, so that Ontarians can spend less time waiting for transit and more time on valuable things in life like family, friends and work. With better public transit we will have fewer cars on the road, leading to less congestion.

Finally, fewer cars on the roads mean lower operation costs to maintain road networks. We are committed to improving the transit experience so that we can continue to support growth across the GTHA. We are dedicated to improving transportation for all Ontarians so that our province can prosper.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Dave Smith): Back to the member from Niagara Centre for a two-minute comment.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I'd like to thank my friend from Niagara Falls for a well-needed history lesson. I would also like to thank my colleague from University-Rosedale and the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore for very thoughtful presentations.

Madam Speaker, the member from Flamborough-Glanbrook—I have no idea what she was talking about. I don't think she did either.

As for my friend from Niagara West, I didn't come here to fight. I presented something that I thought we could all agree with. The only thing that's missing is a time commitment. If the government wasn't ready to give a time commitment, say so. If they have a different time commitment, say so.

We're all committed, apparently, to this project. Any confusion in the past came from comments the Premier has made or from the minister leaving out dates for completion of this project. That's where the confusion has come from.

All we're trying to do is get everyone on the same page and decide on a timeline for this project that apparently we all agree with. It's not a time for drinking the Kool-Aid and getting angry at each other. It's a very simple thing that we're asking here. I would ask that the government honour its commitment to Niagara by voting yes on my motion in order to give Niagara a clear timeline and the commitment it needs to go forward.

It's been a long road for the people of Niagara. We ask this government to provide clarity for businesses and individuals in Niagara—not political games, clarity. Thank you.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Suze Morrison: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should affirm that

affordable housing is a basic human right by reducing the wait-list for rent-geared-to-income housing, funding at least one third of the costs of municipal social housing capital repairs and funding the construction of new rent-geared-to-income homes in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Ms. Morrison has moved private member's notice of motion number 16. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Suze Morrison: It is my distinct honour and pleasure to rise in this House today and speak to this motion, both as the official opposition critic for housing and as a woman who knows first-hand what it feels like to struggle to find affordable housing in this province.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to start by briefly outlining what's in the motion. First, it affirms housing as a human right. Shelter—the ability to protect ourselves from the elements, a place to create safety, a space to root our lives, build our families and contribute to our communities—is the most basic requirement that everyone in Ontario deserves to have equal access to.

Many of my colleagues may recall learning about Maslow's hierarchy of needs in school. The foundation of that pyramid, the most basic need that we must have met just to survive, is shelter. Madam Speaker, if we want to build the kind of Ontario where everyone has the opportunity to build safe and fulfilling lives, it starts with having a roof over our heads. We must recognize that housing is a basic human right, and we must collectively strive to achieve that for everyone.

Second, this motion calls for specific actions of this House to work towards ensuring equal access to affordable housing across Ontario. It does this specifically by addressing the wait-list for rent-geared-to-income housing, by funding at least one third of the backlogged cost of repairs to social housing, which, as I will speak to in a moment, is leading to the closure of housing units across this province—these are units we can't afford to lose—and, third, with a commitment to funding the construction of new rent-geared-to-income homes across Ontario.

We need a fulsome, comprehensive approach to housing. I would suggest that this motion puts forward just a small piece of a broader housing strategy. I would call on my colleagues on the government side of the House to work to prioritize a housing strategy for the people of Ontario.

Madam Speaker, I'm not alone in this sentiment. Last year, the Auditor General of Ontario, in chapter 3 of her report, said: "Given the broader social and economic implications of so many Ontarians living in inadequate housing, it would be reasonable for the government to have a comprehensive strategy."

Interjection: "Reasonable."

Ms. Suze Morrison: "Reasonable," I know.

The report goes on further to specify that Ontario has one of the largest social housing wait-lists in the entire country, and that wait times are lengthy and growing longer. It also says that applicants on social housing wait-

lists face affordability challenges and that those affordability challenges are likely to increase when the current housing contracts in place expire over the course of the next 15 years.

The Auditor General paints a bleak picture for the status of housing, and particularly affordable housing, in our province. We don't have enough affordable housing. We can barely keep the units that we have open, because they're in such a state of disrepair. People are waiting up to decades to get access to housing that they can afford.

The data that paints the picture of the current state of our housing system in Ontario is embarrassing. Since 2003, the wait-list for affordable housing has grown to approximately 185,000 families. This means that there are now more people waiting on a wait-list for affordable housing in this province than actually housed in units. Some of those people are waiting upwards of nine years for a place to call home that they can afford. Thirty-two per cent of the people on those wait-lists, or about 59,000 people across this province, are our seniors. Our elders deserve to live with dignity and safety in homes that are in good repair and that they can afford.

When we look at just how bad the capital repair situation in housing has become, the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association estimates a \$2.6-billion repair backlog. These capital repairs are vital to ensuring that these buildings are in a good state of repair, that people have homes that are safe to live in and that we have a stock of affordable housing that will last for the next generation. Here in Toronto alone, the Toronto Community Housing Corp. will have to close 1,000 units this year as a result of lack of funding for repairs.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to share a story about what it's truly like to live on the wait-list for affordable housing. I was born in a small rural town north of Parry Sound. After my family lost a house to a fire, we spent a few years living in a refurbished school bus. A few years later, my mom moved us to Toronto in pursuit of a better life. She went back to school and entered the Toronto Community Housing wait-list when I was nine years old. She wasn't placed in a housing unit until 15 years later, by which point I had graduated university and moved on to the next chapter of my life with my husband.

In those 15 years, we fought evictions, and we had our phone lines disconnected on a regular basis when we couldn't afford to pay the bill. We struggled to keep food in the cupboards. At one point, my high school had to step up and pay for my bus tickets so I could afford to get to class every day. But the heartbreaking thing is that my story is not a unique one; it has become the norm in this province. Every week, my constituency office hears from people who live in one of the many community housing buildings in my riding of Toronto Centre. Their stories are heartbreaking. People are struggling to live in units that are in desperate need of repair.

1520

I brought just two emails that I'd like to share with this House today that have come from constituents in my riding.

The first reads: "My name is Patricia. And I really need someone's help.

"I called both the Ontario and Toronto ombudsmen. They don't deal with housing.

"I have to get out. I have lived here about one and a half years; it will be two years in April.... Last winter my heat was between 15 and 18 C. I have one arthritic knee. By March I could barely walk except by gritting my teeth and holding on to the wall. I came into this place with an arthritic knee but able to walk fine. It was the cold that did that.

"I often spent nights at the women's shelter on Adelaide Street as they had heat.

"I had to drop out doing the garden at The Stop, where I volunteered. All summer I have been exercising but can't get my knee back to what it was.

"I am a 78-year-old woman."

We have a woman living in Toronto Community Housing who is staying in shelter beds and using shelter resources because it is not safe for her to live in her apartment.

I have another email from a constituent. It's from a doctor. It reads:

"I have a patient in my practice who is living in a subsidized-housing unit near Dundas and Sherbourne. For literally years, I have been requesting a change in housing for this patient as her current situation is adversely affecting her mental and physical health. She is tormented by her neighbours; she is harassed both verbally and physically. She has been physically assaulted in her own building three times over the last month.... a large contributing factor to her condition is her housing, as she constantly feels in danger.

"The reason I am writing to you is because I am trying to explore every avenue for this patient....

"My goal is to get her out as soon as possible. There is only so much one person can take, and she and I have been banging our heads against walls to make something happen for years. When she comes into the clinic today with marks on her body from being recently assaulted and strangled, I cannot stress how critical I feel that this situation is. She needs to be moved out of her current residence to where she can feel safe."

This was signed by "a doctor in Corktown."

I think it's prudent to note that both of these cases relied on the medical priority transfer wait-list process at Toronto Community Housing, which has been backlogged by the general wait-list. But the medical priority wait-list, which is over two years in length, was also recently cancelled.

I refuse to believe that in our prosperous province we can't do better. So today, I want to talk about what we can do to alleviate the housing crisis that so many folks are experiencing.

The government of Ontario must recognize that housing is a basic human right. We can no longer go from bad to worse in the province. It's simply unacceptable. We can no longer pretend that it is okay for our seniors and our children to wait years for access to decent and safe housing. We have to reduce the wait-list for rent-gear-to-

income housing and ensure that all of the people who have been waiting for years are able to be placed into a unit that is in a reasonable state of repair.

I want to address the backlog in capital repairs and social housing across this province. In the mid-1990s, the Conservative predecessor to this government, Premier Harris, downloaded the cost of capital repairs of housing onto municipalities without any real understanding of whether they were fiscally able to address it. Over the past two decades, as the backlog in capital repairs has steadily continued to grow, units and buildings have deteriorated beyond a reasonable condition.

It is only fair for the province to step in to help remediate the mess that it created.

By funding at least one third of the cost of municipal housing capital repairs, we can ensure a faster turnaround for folks waiting on wait-lists and a general better quality of housing for everyone in Ontario. But we cannot stop there, Madam Speaker. We must fund the construction of new rent-geared-to-income homes in Ontario. Only with a new stock of homes across the province will we be able to alleviate the worst of the housing crisis.

I cannot emphasize enough how meaningful decent affordable housing is to everyone in this province, particularly to folks who live in poverty. I can't help but think, as I stand in this room, how different my childhood could have been if I hadn't spent the majority of it on a wait-list for housing while we paid rent in a place we couldn't afford. There were days when I wouldn't have had to go to school hungry; there were days when I wouldn't have had to worry about getting bus tickets to school or how embarrassing it would be when a friend's parent tried to call home and the phone lines were disconnected again. No child in this province should have to experience that.

Through you, Madam Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues who care about housing in this province to vote in favour of this motion. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Hon. Steve Clark: It's an honour, as Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, to rise and speak to the motion. I want to begin by thanking the member for Toronto Centre for bringing the motion forward. As minister, I'm always pleased to talk about our government for the people's commitment on affordable housing.

Speaker, I served eight years in opposition, including a bit of time as the municipal affairs and housing critic. I participated in many affordable housing debates like this one we're having this afternoon. There was a lot of talk by the previous government over those eight years and during the seven before I arrived, and what we didn't see from the previous Liberal government—or the NDP, who were in lockstep with them 97% of the time—was real action. The result was that now we have a deficit of \$15 billion, a debt of \$340 billion, and when it comes to affordable housing, we've got really little to show for it.

Speaker, I want to make sure that you don't take my word for it, that you look at what the Auditor General said in her 2017 annual report. As of December 2016, she found

that there were 185,000 households, or about 481,000 men, women and children, on a wait-list for affordable housing. The number of households that were on the wait-list had actually increased by 36% over the previous government's 13 years in office leading up to that audit.

On the supply side, the Auditor General found just 20,000 units with below-market rent that were built between 1996 and 2016. I don't want to spend a lot of time talking about statistics and about the past because this debate, as the member opposite talked about, is about the people and providing them a brighter future than the previous government offered to them, but I had to highlight those numbers because it's really at the core of what we've been talking about. I know the President of the Treasury Board would want me to use those numbers as a backdrop.

The motion, as the member opposite talked about, really covers three areas: reducing the wait time for rent-geared-to-income housing; to fix the backlog of capital repairs in existing municipal social housing stock; and finally, to build new rent-geared-to-income housing. I have to say that I agree that we need action in all three of those areas. I'm certain, though, that the member opposite and I might have different ideas on how we're going to actually get there. It doesn't make me any less committed to working every day as minister to ensure that Ontarians have a secure and affordable place to go home to at the end of the day.

Since becoming minister, I've had the fortunate opportunity to meet and speak with many stakeholders. I've been very up front with them that I'm open to their ideas but on one condition: I don't want the discussion to only be about how much the province can fund something. I want to be realistic based on our current fiscal situation, and if we don't wake up to that reality, our ability to provide housing, health care, education and all of the services that Ontarians rely on is going to be in jeopardy. I've challenged service managers, the real estate and development sector, all of the stakeholders, for solutions that won't add to the tax burden that Ontarians are already under.

1530

As a government, we're going to do our part to get out of the way of projects that will build the desperately needed affordable housing. I believe firmly that, working with my colleagues in cabinet across all ministries, we can cut red tape and we can reduce the time it takes to approve permits to bring more supply to market faster.

I have also, Speaker, signalled my commitment that we want to work with the federal government to explore opportunities to develop more affordable housing under the National Housing Strategy. Again, that must happen within the broader budgetary decisions that our government is making in light of what we've learned through our line-by-line audit.

I have to say—I've said this many times—that I'm very pleased the federal government is now back involved in the housing scene. It will make Ontario's case that we want our fair share of what's available to repair, maintain and grow our social and affordable housing stock. I believe very confidently that by working together, we can

build more community-based affordable housing to ensure that every Ontario family and individual finds the housing solution that works for them.

I sincerely hope that I can work with my critic, the member for Toronto Centre. I appreciate her bringing another housing motion to the floor that we've had before. Again, I just pledge to her that if she wants to sit down with me and sit down with my ministry, I want to offer my ministry the opportunity to brief her on some of the programs that we work on together. If she'd like to take me up on that, I can schedule that.

I thank you, Madam Speaker. It's always good to see you in the chair. I look forward to listening to further debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: It's my great honour to rise in the House to speak to this motion by my colleague the member for Toronto Centre and the critic for housing. I'm particularly delighted to be able to speak both as the critic for poverty and homelessness and also as the member for Beaches–East York, which is a riding that has a lot of diversity, both socio-economic and ethno-racial.

While we have a number of areas in the riding that are extremely comfortable, there is also extreme poverty. One of the absolutely, notoriously worst privately owned buildings in the city is in this riding.

I'm going to be sharing my time with the member from Parkdale–High Park and the member from Toronto–Danforth.

I think it is really important, and I think that my colleagues across the aisle will be delighted, I would think, to embrace this motion, because it's absolutely critical for everybody, and especially those who say that they govern in the name of the people, to embrace the notion of housing as a human right. We all deserve to live in a safe, dignified home, not merely to have a roof over our head that is falling apart, that is full of mould, that has no electricity or running water.

This House was brought to its feet in a moment of silence last week when one of our members talked about a young girl in his riding in the community of Bearskin Lake who had died by suicide. He talked about the way that poverty and precarious housing—poor housing, inadequate housing—had contributed to the factors that caused her death.

For seven years, she lived in a home that had no hydro, had no running water and had no toilet. These conditions were appalling and, in the end, helped to lead to her death. This House was brought to its feet and to silence, and I think that it is incumbent upon all of us to do something about those conditions.

I want to tell a couple of stories that come from my own riding. I was speaking to a gentleman when I was canvassing in the spring who told me that he is on ODSP. He's on ODSP because as an older gentleman who is undergoing cancer treatments, he can no longer work.

For him, the idea of social assistance as a job is cruel and unreasonable. He's on a list for social housing. But his

concern is that, every year, the rent on his apartment goes up and up and up, and now his ODSP payments, which were expected to rise by 3%, will not be rising by 3% and they will not keep pace. He is lying awake at night in terror that he is going to be kicked out of his apartment, unable to work, before he gets into social housing. I hope that keeps all of you up at night.

There's another person in my riding I want to talk about. She's a single mother. She has three kids and one of them is disabled. Because he is disabled, she has to take him to the Holland Bloorview Kids rehab centre on an almost-weekly basis, and sometimes more than that. Because she does, she can't work. Because she's a single mother and she has no other source of support, she is on OW. She has been told by the landlord that she is going to be evicted because he needs the room for a relative. Maybe the relative exists; maybe the relative doesn't exist. But the fact is that she is panicking at this point because she can't find somewhere else to stay.

So I want you to think about the importance of housing as a human right. I want you to think what it means to have a roof over our heads. I want you to understand that research has shown that without housing, we cannot begin to heal and we cannot begin to work, so let us think about what it means to provide that space. Folks who need it—we have done research that shows that once people have that roof over their heads, they can get over addictions and they can actually begin to heal and to move on with their lives. Please, let's make this happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I'm honoured as parliamentary assistant for housing and the MPP for Etobicoke–Lakeshore to join this afternoon's debate. I want to focus on the idea of housing as a human right. Let me be clear: We, on this side of the House, support without hesitation the idea that every Ontarian deserves a safe, affordable place to live and to raise their family. We also agree that the principles of human rights apply to housing. That means there is zero tolerance for someone to be denied a home on the basis of discrimination.

Speaker, a home is more than a place to live. It is the foundation upon which everything in a person's life is built. It's what connects us to our community and gives us that stability that we need in order to live a healthy, happy and successful life.

I truly thank the member opposite for bringing forward this motion. It has given all of us the opportunity to share those personal stories that remind us that this is about real people who are depending on us to act. As MPPs, we know the human side of this issue and the heartbreaking consequences of a lack of affordable housing. We see the pain etched in the faces of the people who come to our constituency offices every day looking for help. They come through our doors for many reasons, but so often a lack of housing stability is at the core of their struggles.

As the minister explained, we can't give those constituents the roof over their heads they need to get a new start unless we stop talking about building housing and do it. At

the end of our four-year term, we'll be measured by not how lofty our rhetoric was in the Legislature, but the number of housing spaces built on our watch. Instead of debating whether housing is a human right, let's work together on real solutions that put shovels in the ground. Declaring that housing is a human right without providing new supply is effectively meaningless.

1540

People desperate for places to live don't want politicians patting themselves on the back for feel-good gestures. People are tired of that style of government after living through it for 15 years, which is why they gave us such a resounding mandate on June 7.

Speaker, during the recent campaign, all parties agreed with Ontarians who told us that building more affordable housing was a priority. That gives us some common ground across the aisle. We are open to any and all ideas that give families and individuals a place of their own and a hope for a brighter tomorrow.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I'd like to begin by thanking my colleague the member for Toronto Centre for bringing forward this very important motion that recognizes housing as a human right. Everyone should have the right to an affordable, safe and secure home and community where they can live in dignity, yet most people in this province, including many in my riding of Parkdale–High Park, do not have access to affordable housing. They do not have this basic human right.

What does "housing as a human right" mean? I would encourage the government members to listen intently, because housing as a human right means more than just four walls and a roof over your head. It means being legally protected against forced evictions, harassment and intimidation, and having laws that protect tenants from unreasonable rent prices and increases. It means that the housing that you have is truly affordable. We cannot have housing that costs more than half of our income. ACORN defines "affordable" as no more than 30% of household income, because the cost of housing should not threaten other fundamental needs like food, child care and prescription medicines.

Housing as a human right means having homes that are properly maintained, not places with mould or bedbug infestations or places that don't have proper heating. It means accessibility, ensuring that the home that you live in accommodates your needs, whether you're a senior or someone with a different ability or with medical needs. It has to allow everyone to live in dignity. It means having a home with sufficient space for you and your family, not a family of six crammed into a small one-bedroom apartment.

This motion declaring housing as a human right makes another very important point: that housing is for homes for people to live in, not profits for speculators. This is what successive Liberal and Conservative governments have failed to understand: that the housing market and the

system that we have deliberately created only benefit developers, corporate landlords and speculators. This motion seeks to change that.

Speaker, the reality is that in a wealthy province like Ontario, we can ensure that every Ontarian has this basic right. How do we do that? By:

- getting Ontario back into the business of building affordable and supportive housing;

- having legislation that cracks down on rent gouging and stopping landlords from forcibly evicting tenants just to jack up the rent;

- cracking down on above-guideline rent increases and on renovations;

- clamping down on speculation and property flipping; and

- bringing in new anti-speculation taxes where the funds go directly into building affordable and supportive housing.

The Conservatives created this crisis in affordable housing when they killed rent control and downloaded social housing onto municipalities with no way to pay for it. The Liberals watched the housing affordability crisis grow over 14 years and did nothing except to make the problem worse with funding cuts. And now we have a Premier who says he opposes any government action to protect tenants against unfair rent hikes or to rein in speculation, and he freely admits that he will do nothing to make affordable housing a priority for Ontario's families.

Speaker, this government claims that they want to address mental health issues, cut hospital wait times and end hallway medicine. If you are really serious about it, you should recognize housing as a human right and deliver on it. We all know that there is a direct link between housing and health and well-being.

There is no more time for delay. It's time for action. Vote in favour of this motion. Recognize housing as a human right.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate?

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: Housing is a key issue in Scarborough Centre. On the campaign trail, I knocked on hundreds of doors, and housing was a recurring subject. As single detached home prices in the GTA have skyrocketed, many people have simply given up their dreams of ever owning a home. In Scarborough Centre, I visited countless apartment buildings that are bursting at the seams with large families that are living in small one- or two-bedroom units. For low-income earners, private apartments are unaffordable, so they turn to social housing. But getting into housing is only part of the battle and the problem.

Last night, I was at a Toronto Community Housing complex in my riding, with residents, members of the Toronto police force, TCHC representatives and the municipal councillor for our riding. We were doing a walk-through of the Canlish community after being informed of numerous alarming safety issues at a community town hall a few weeks prior.

The Canlish community has been the site of many shootings, with three having occurred very recently. While walking through, residents pointed out places where the shootings had occurred and showed me the bullet holes that remain and serve as a sombre reminder that their safety is not guaranteed. Numerous bullet holes stand in stark contrast next to the community's playground, where children walk by them on a daily basis.

We identified countless dangerous spots across the community over the course of the walk-through. Issues ranged from dark alleys and hiding spots to absent or shoddy fences and appalling wiring that snaked and hung all along a staircase that residents have to walk through on a daily basis.

The people of Canlish told me that they are afraid to walk out of their units at night because they're not safe. They cannot walk from one unit to another to visit a friend.

Residents showed me parts of the complex that are falling apart: Drywall is crumbling, paint is chipping and windows do not hold in heat.

This is not a rare occurrence; this is commonplace. I have had numerous TCHC residents show up to my office with photos of their living conditions, asking for help. My office and this government are doing everything we can, but social housing in Toronto has a repair backlog in some areas of over half a decade. Canlish is one of the most neglected communities in the system. This is yet another example of how Scarborough has been left behind.

In speaking with TCHC representatives who joined our walk-through, it was clear that they know that the situation in the Canlish community is unacceptable and that they struggled to get the community the help that it needs under the previous Liberal government.

The Canlish community in Scarborough Centre is a perfect illustration of why we need to pick up where the last provincial government clearly failed. This starts with acknowledging the problem. Affordable housing, yes, is absolutely an area that needs to be part of the conversation. But this conversation cannot be simply about getting people into housing. Reducing wait times is great, but if this just expedites getting people into tenuous living conditions where they are in danger both because of violence and unsafe living conditions, we have failed the people of Ontario. Affordable housing matters, but we need to ensure that Ontario's affordable housing is safe and provides families with a community that they feel safe in and can thrive in.

Applause.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate? Further debate? The member for Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you. I couldn't hear you. There was so much applause. You know how it is, Speaker.

I appreciate the opportunity to address this issue. First, I want to thank the member from Toronto Centre for bringing this forward. This issue is a pressing issue. It's an issue that's a crisis for many, many hundreds of thousands of families in this province. Bringing it forward and having this debate is not going to solve the problem, but it is part

of the process of making sure it's on the agenda, on the radar, so that when we get into discussions of how money is going to be allocated in this province in the years to come, this issue is one that's right at the top of the list.

The member asks for very simple things: putting the money into social housing to keep it standing, building new rent-gear-to-income housing—these things are critical if we're actually going to ensure that we don't have the rhetoric that the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore referred to. She actually made some pretty good points, I have to say.

Your government will be judged over the next few years by the number of units that you save and that you build. Your government will be judged, as the member from Parkdale–High Park says, by whether or not you bring in rent control that actually protects people from being driven out of their units as they are being driven out right now.

The situation before us is one that creates many desperate situations for many people. My colleague from Beaches–East York talked about the discussions she had had with people. I have those discussions in my constituency office with people coming close to retirement age, realizing that they can no longer afford the rent in the unit that they're in and checking to see if there's anything available nearby, realizing that not only will they lose their unit, but they're going to lose their whole neighbourhood. They are going to have to move a long way away to be able to continue to have shelter.

This issue must be addressed.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The member for Toronto Centre has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Suze Morrison: I'd like to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, as well as the members for Beaches–East York, Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Parkdale–High Park and Toronto–Danforth for their thoughtful comments.

Through you, Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank my colleagues for understanding the necessity of recognizing affordable housing as a human right. This province has to stand up and fund initiatives that will improve both the quantity and the quality of the stock of affordable housing in Ontario.

To reiterate, many stakeholders across Ontario, including the Auditor General, have pressed that concrete steps need to be taken to make affordable housing more accessible. Today, we have an opportunity to enact these changes; namely, to affirm affordable housing as a human right, to reduce the wait-list for rent-gear-to-income housing, to fund the province's fair share of the backlog of capital repairs in social housing and to fund the construction of new rent-gear-to-income homes across the province.

As I mentioned earlier, constituents in my riding want nothing more than to be able to access safe, decent, affordable housing units that are in a good state of repair and not wait on a waiting list for years. Ontarians deserve better. They deserve to see necessary investments to build 65,000 units of affordable housing over the next decade, including co-op and non-profit housing. They deserve to

see social housing in a state of good repair instead of watching units be closed because there's no money on the table for the required repairs.

Again, through you, Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to recognize exactly how dire the housing situation is in this province and to do something about it. I look forward to working with the minister on this issue and holding this government accountable for the commitments that it makes on the housing file for all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Consideration of private members' public business has concluded before the expiry of the two and a half hours of time allotted. This House is therefore suspended until 4:20 p.m., at which time I will be putting the questions to the House.

The House suspended proceedings from 1552 to 1620.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

ALTERNATE LAND USE
AND SERVICES PROGRAM
FOR AGRICULTURAL LAND ACT, 2018

LOI DE 2018 SUR UN PROGRAMME
DE DIVERSIFICATION DES MODES
D'UTILISATION DES TERRES AGRICOLES
ET DES SERVICES PRODUITS
SUR CES TERRES

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): We will deal first with ballot item number 16, standing in the name of Mr. Barrett.

Mr. Barrett has moved second reading of Bill 28, An Act respecting a voluntary program for the alternate use of agricultural land and the production of ecosystem services on that land.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare it carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is referred to the Committee of the Whole House.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, I would request the proposed legislation be referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Is the majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills? Carried.

GO TRANSIT

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Mr. Burch has moved private member's notice of motion number 15.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare that carried.

Motion agreed to.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Ms. Morrison has moved private member's notice of motion number 16.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? That's carried.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Orders of the day.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I rise to—

Interjection: No, no.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: No? Sorry, sorry.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: Government notice of motion 8.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): Government notice of motion number 8: Resuming the debate adjourned on September 27, 2018, on the amendment to the motion regarding allocation of time on government order number 6.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Returning to the member from Markham–Stouffville.

Applause.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Thank you. Wonderful. Thank you, colleagues, for that wonderful reception. I do appreciate that.

I'll be very brief, Madam Speaker. As I'd mentioned earlier, I will be splitting my time with the President of the Treasury Board. In light of the fact that the president is prepared to give a more fulsome explanation of some of the things that we are bringing forward, I would be delighted at this point to end my remarks and look forward to the great member, the President of the Treasury Board, the member for Pickering–Uxbridge, to enlighten us further.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Further debate? The President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: This time I got it right, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

Interjection: It's so tough.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Yes, I know. That's what I do all day: I stand up; I sit down; I clap. I'm getting really good at it and it's a great workout.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I'm going to move my briefcase so I don't trip over it. Thank you for that.

I'm pleased to rise today to speak in favour of the Select Committee on Financial Transparency. Since being elected, our government has worked tirelessly to restore trust and accountability to the province's finances.

On September 21, the Minister of Finance announced the results of the Independent Financial Commission of Inquiry. That same day, the Treasury Board released the previous government's public accounts, which laid bare the Liberal government's reckless spending habits.

On September 25, I released the much-anticipated line-by-line review of the government's books. This third-party report, conducted by EY Canada, revealed a number of concerning findings. Madam Speaker, Ontario's total operating expenditures have increased by 55%, or \$2,226 per woman, man and child in today's dollars. Had expenditures increased in line with the population growth, the expenditures of 2017-18 would have been \$31.4 billion less this year and, in total, would have been \$331 billion lower over 15 years. The growth of total operating expenditures has outpaced population growth in Ontario by 1.9%. Operating expenditures through transfer payments, including the broader public sector, have grown by \$46.3 billion, or 99.8% of total real growth in operating expenditures. These are staggering numbers, Madam Speaker, and very sobering.

These findings were based on 15 years of financial records from Ontario's ledger system, comprising over 233,000 lines of financial account data. It also includes 22,000 additional lines of financial information for transfer payments made by government. An additional 11 years of financial data was reviewed for hospitals, school boards and colleges, comprising 286,000 lines of data. In total, this is over 500,000 lines of data that EY Canada reviewed.

EY Canada also undertook a comparative analysis of Ontario against three other provinces and three sub-national governments outside of Canada. I can talk quite authoritatively about this, because for many years outside in the private sector, I ran the credit-rating agency Dominion Bond Rating Service. The teams that I led were global teams that were responsible for the credit ratings of a number of sovereign entities throughout the globe, and I can talk quite a bit about Ontario, BC and Quebec as being three of those.

One thing that struck me: how much provinces like British Columbia over a decade ago started to say that they had a fiscal challenge. In order to protect core services, the credit card of the people of Ontario or any sovereign jurisdiction is not unlimited. If you doubt this, just ask the people of Greece, who are going to suffer for a whole generation because of irresponsible spending; talk to the people of Turkey today who are suffering because of significant spending without any accountability.

In fact, I can talk about my mother. My mother, who left Hungary during World War II—bombs and bullets—was nine years old. Her best friend, my godmother, also left at the same age, around nine or 10. They fled during World War II. My mother and her family escaped and made their way to Canada. My mother's friend's family escaped and made their way to Venezuela. In the early 1950s there wasn't much difference between Canada and Venezuela: both had riches, both had good economies. But Venezuela has taken a different path over that period of time, over the last 60, 70 years. They've got hyperinflation, their economy is out of control, and democracy and freedoms are not there. And so, when you don't take care of the expenditures and you don't have accountability, you can't provide the core services.

My godmother, who lives there now, relies on a pension from the government. She's worked her whole life, and now the government cannot afford the pension. Madam Speaker, that's irresponsible. That's a real story about a fork in the road between two human beings: one went to the great country of Canada—and Venezuela, which was a good place to go, which is no longer a good place to go, or at least they've got their challenges.

I would also add that, looking at other jurisdictions in Canada—I'll spend a little bit of time talking about British Columbia, who has the same situation that we have: an aging population; 15 years ago expenditures were growing faster than the revenues, and they said they had a problem. So they took action early. They took action to find savings. They took action to get their fiscal house in order, and they did. Now their expenditure growth is below the revenue growth. The health care system isn't collapsing in British Columbia. The education system isn't collapsing in British Columbia. The social safety net isn't collapsing in British Columbia. Yet they have the ability, should there be a shock to the system, to be able to provide the supports if we have a global recession or if we have a bad turn on the trade negotiations. They're in a position to be able to do something about it.

1630

Madam Speaker, their debt-to-GDP, which is a measure that many use to measure the fiscal health of a jurisdiction, is 15%. They have a triple-A rating. Investment has confidence in the province of British Columbia. We, on the other hand, have a debt-to-GDP that's very close to 40%.

I was on Steve Paikin and The Agenda last night, and—

Mr. Peter Tabuns: And you were good.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Oh, thank you, Peter; thank you. There's one thing that we can agree on.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I said to myself, "If I see Peter Bethlenfalvy on The Agenda, I've got to see it." Absolutely.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I'm very honoured to have gotten that response from the member opposite—Peter. One thing we share is a great first name, so thank you for that, Peter—but a good guy.

And on there, I reflected that Deb Matthews—can I say names in the House?

Interjection: Sure you can.

Interjections.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Yes, Deb Matthews—

Mr. John Vanthof: It's Thursday afternoon.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: It's Thursday afternoon and I'm among friends.

Interjection: Thursday rules.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thursday rules. She was on The Agenda about a year ago, saying that 40% was a red line that you do not want to cross, and 40% is where we're close to right now. We've just had 10 years of economic recovery since the great financial recession. In good times, at least I was always taught, you put a few nuts away to store for the bad times, because when the bad times come and recessions do hit, the laws of economy are not going to disappear. You have a situation where governments

have to support those who need support the most. We're not being responsible by not being responsible today. We need to think about the future. We need to think about the long term. We need to protect those core services that Ontarians expect in this generation and future generations.

I'll also talk about another province, Quebec, where I grew up. The great province of Quebec has always had fiscal challenges, for a number of reasons, but they too had a fiscal challenge 10 years ago and they decided to take action. The medicine wasn't easy. You had to look at expenditures; you had to look at a range of options; cut red tape; and they have been able to do it. They've had five years of surpluses. They are paying down debt, much like British Columbia. Has the health care collapsed in Quebec? No, it hasn't. Has the education system collapsed in Quebec? No, it hasn't. Has the social safety net collapsed? No, it hasn't. However, they are on a trajectory where they're paying down debt. They're getting it to more of a reasonable level, so that should you have shocks to the system, you can act and support the core services that we need. When you decide to make new investments, like this government is making in mental health and addiction, you have the ability to pay. The ability to pay is not unlimited with the credit card of the people of Ontario.

There's a couple of examples. They're in the EY Canada report, and I encourage all the members on all sides to go through the report. There's a tremendous amount of data; there's a tremendous amount of ideas in there. By the way, they're ideas that we should all consider and work together on, because this is a shared challenge within this province.

Let me talk a little bit about the 15 years of historical data on the revenue side, the expenditure side, the gross domestic product side, the population, inflation and program outcome measures. EY did extensive interviews with 75 senior—it's difficult to talk about the massive debt that we have in this province.

Interjection.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: That's two for two from the distinguished member opposite.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'll denounce you later.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you.

Extensive interviews with 75 government officials across all ministries were conducted. Feedback received from the government's Planning for Prosperity public consultations was also incorporated in the report. By the way, there are a great many examples in this report of what people said. Given that some of the online consultation was anonymous, I suspect that we did get, from the two members staring me down right now, some ideas; in fact, these may be your ideas. I wish I could ascribe them to you.

Mr. John Vanthof: Let's not go that far.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I'm hearing, Madam Speaker, that I may be pushing it a little bit so I'll pull back before you give me a warning.

The great thing about this survey, this outreach to the people of Ontario—including the outreach to the Ontario public service, the people in government—was that we received, in a few short weeks, 15,000 surveys completed

from Ontarians—15,000. That's a terrific consultation. You also had the ability to put three ideas in there, and so we had multiple ideas. We had 26,000 ideas.

I'd like to just read some of them, because they're in the report. For example, "The improved use of technology and data will allow for more efficient and effective delivery of public services."

One person said, "Make more services available online."

Mr. John Vanthof: How about access to the Internet across Ontario?

Interjections.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Well, Peter is laughing a third time but I don't—three strikes and you're out.

"Use modern IT to achieve cost savings across all government services."

"Share data across ministries to improve citizens' experience of government."

You may laugh at these ideas, but these are people—they may be from your side. They're anonymous. They may be from the Ontario public service. They may be other Ontarians. The point is, we asked their opinion, and there's no such thing as a bad idea. All these ideas we should take under consideration. We're going through all those ideas.

Let me tell you what outreach looks like. In the first or second week of being sworn in—the first week—I said to the deputy minister, "I would like to meet everyone in the ministry." She said, "Minister, you realize there are 1,800 people in your ministry." And I said, "No, I didn't realize that. I want to start meeting them all."

So we went out the first week. The first department we went out to see—777 Bay Street, I believe, is where they're housed—is the internal audit department. I did a tour—great people—got a lot of good ideas, and at the end of it, Rick Kennedy, who is the head of the department, said, "Minister, I've been working here in internal audit for 26 years. You are the first minister that has ever set foot on this floor. Thank you for coming."

Interjections.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: I'm pushing the envelope again. I'm getting a little signal from the members opposite.

It was very rewarding for me to meet a lot of people, but the richness of the ideas, the motivation, what I felt from those people we talked to, the ideas that we got—I got a sense that this was a partnership. This wasn't the front lines on one side and government on the other side. This was, "We are doing things together." They're thirsting to put a lot of their really good ideas and help modernize government, to transform government.

I just recently went to London to go meet some of the Ontario Provincial Police Association members to hear from the front lines, from union members—I've met a lot of the union members now—what they have to say. Some of the stories that I'm hearing from the front lines are heart-wrenching.

So my resolve and the resolve of this House should be that we've got to do more to help these people, our front-line workers. But it isn't by spending without accountability. We need to know where the money is going, why

we're spending that money and whether they are achieving the outcomes that we want from government. That is important.

One thing we did learn—and it's in the report as well—is that 82% of government spending is transfer payments. Guess what? We don't have a great database of where that money is going. The line of sight is not good. EY tried to access the data to find out where the money is going, and they couldn't find it all the time. What does that tell you? It tells you that, if you don't know where the money is going, if you can't measure it, if you can't say, "Is this value for money?"—and I don't think the members opposite would feel any different about that, because we all care. We want to make sure that those scarce taxpayer dollars are managed in the most effective way.

I also met with the psychiatry institute of Ontario in London as well—again, a number of union members who are working with the most affected mental health patients, children, in Ontario. They're trying to manage their expenses effectively. They had some great ideas on areas where government is spending money inefficiently. Again, people had more ideas collectively here in one stop, in London, Ontario, with the provincial police and with our psychiatric doctors—a terrific facility.

This is why we're doing these consultations. We're getting great ideas. We've got to turn it from a consultation to a conversation now. Now we've got to take action. I think there's a clear indication that Ontarians are hungry for a government that governs differently and more efficiently.

1640

Let me now turn to some of the hard, cold realities of what we've decided to do with this select committee and why. For the past few years, the Auditor General of Ontario has been warning us, this very Legislature, that the accounting practices of the past government were not acceptable. Her warnings were obviously ignored by the past government. What each of these reports said was that illuminating and speaking directly to the people needs to be done so that they can understand what took place under the previous government's watch.

Mr. Bill Walker: What was that last government called?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: The previous Liberal government.

Mr. Bill Walker: Enabled by the—

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: With our friendly members opposite—

Mr. Bill Walker: The NDP government.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: The NDP, who voted with the Liberals 97% of the time. I understand that. I know the leader of the other independent party, the Green Party, has voted, I think, almost 100%.

Mr. Bill Walker: Ninety-seven per cent.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Ninety-seven per cent as well. These are some percentages that need to be worked on.

Mr. John Vanthof: Minister, you should justify that.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Will do.

The member opposite has suggested—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Order, please.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I think what the member opposite has suggested is that we do an independent financial commission of inquiry on that number, which I think we would agree with. We need to shine a light on the past practices of the previous Liberal government and the party opposite to see if 97% was, in fact, an accurate number, because the people of Ontario want answers. They want to know if 97% is the right number. I think I can safely say I'm going to save the taxpayers a lot of money by saying, "Forget the commission of inquiry for that; it was 97%."

Mr. Bill Walker: Or thereabouts.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Or thereabouts.

What each of these reports from the Auditor General and the Financial Accountability Officer have said was that we need to shine a light and be more transparent with the people of Ontario, but we also must understand what took place.

To start, I would like to underscore that our government exists to serve the people. Part of our commitment to the people in this province is to build trust. The people trust that their government will share with them the facts about how taxpayer dollars have been spent. We will get to the bottom of this.

In fact, may I highlight, Madam Speaker, that for the first time in three years, under this government, we have now gotten a clean opinion from the Auditor General, which is important for the people of Ontario, to know that while they're sleeping at night and sending tax dollars to Queen's Park, they can rest assured that this government respects their money and that we'll give a true accounting of exactly how their money is spent. A clean audit opinion is the result of that.

I would like to take a moment, though, to quote the Auditor General and the commission of financial inquiry so that we all further understand why we are launching the select committee. This is a pre-warning: I'm going to quote some stuff that is not the easiest to hear. It is for adult audiences only.

The Auditor General said, "The intention was to avoid showing a deficit in the province's budgets and consolidated ... statements." The Auditor General said that in her 2017 fair hydro report.

The Auditor General said, "The government is making up its own accounting rules." That was also in that same report.

The Auditor General also said, "When governments pass legislation to make their own accounting rules that serve to obfuscate the impact of their financial decisions, their financial statements become unreliable."

The Auditor General said the government "demonstrated a lack of commitment to transparent, fair and accurate reporting of the province's financial performance and health to the taxpayers of Ontario."

Finally, she said, "We concluded that the pre-election report is not a reasonable presentation of Ontario's finances." How is that being honest and truthful with the people of Ontario?

The purpose of this select committee is to get to the bottom of why the Auditor General would have cause to make those statements. We need to get answers. The people of Ontario deserve some answers. We have to hold ourselves accountable in this sacred institution.

Let me tell you a little bit about why there might be some concern over the fair hydro plan and the fair hydro accounting. Why, I would ask—a structure, which I would defy many of us to actually go through, understand and be able to explain to, for example, my mother or to someone who may not be an accountant or a structured-finance professional—why would we need to create a structure that costs the taxpayers of this great province \$4 billion more in borrowing costs than it would cost if we borrowed the money on our own balance sheet?

Let's think about that for a second: \$4 billion of interest—again, not my numbers but the numbers from the Financial Accountability Officer and supported by the Auditor General. What this means is that the government, instead of borrowing money on its own balance sheet, created a structure, an off-balance sheet, in this case through a structure in the IESO, to finance the borrowings to pay for the reduction in hydro rates. By doing so—because it was so convoluted and opaque, the bond market said, “We need more interest to be able to compensate.” However, it is the full faith and credit of the province that backs that commitment. So we are—it's in the report—going to pay more than \$4 billion of extra interest expense.

This is \$4 billion that can be spent on any number of things that we want to spend money on: hospitals, education—

Mr. Bill Walker: Housing, mental health—

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: —housing, infrastructure, transit, and mental health and addiction.

To put this in context, we now spend over \$12 billion on interest. One thing I think we all have to realize is, when these numbers—the expenditures that I talked about earlier, running faster than revenues; the \$338 billion that we are now borrowing, which makes us the largest indebted subnational jurisdiction on the planet. What that means is that the math starts to take over, and it's no longer about ideology; it's about that we don't have an unlimited credit card.

Let me give you some numbers by comparison, because these are sobering.

Mr. Bill Walker: Are we ready for this?

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Are you ready? Is everyone sitting down?

Child protective services are \$1.6 billion. So \$4 billion extra in interest expense—just by how it's structured, we could have borrowed the same amount of money on the balance sheet of the government and saved \$4 billion. So why are we creating this convoluted structure that I would defy any of us to understand? Look, we need to get to the bottom of that. Some \$4 billion, and child protective services are \$1.6 billion.

Post-secondary education and training: \$11.8 billion. The current \$12 billion that we spend is more than we

spend on all education and training in the post-secondary system of Ontario.

Ontario drug program: \$4.7 billion. So that extra interest expense of \$4 billion would almost pay for the full Ontario drug program.

Long-term care—I'll tell another quick personal story. It's a very personal one, but I'm okay to share it here. I was at the hospital last night. My father went into emergency surgery. He's 88. He's had a great life here. He came from Eastern Europe as well. He crossed the Iron Curtain, at great risk to his life. Some of the people that he knew that also tried to cross from Eastern Europe got blown up because of the mines.

He came to Canada, and he had a great life here. He has, still, a great life. He got through the emergency surgery and—

Applause.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you.

You have to know, he's a very stubborn Hungarian, and he loves his scotch, so it's more about the scotch—

Mr. John Vanthof: A chip off the old block.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Yes, I'm a chip off the old block; thank you, John.

Our health care system matters, and long-term care. I don't know what the outcome will be, but that \$4 billion of extra interest expense that we created through this convoluted structure would fund our long-term-care expenditures of \$3.4 billion—right there. This is math; this is not about ideology or whether we care more on one side or the other. We all care.

Home and community care: \$4.3 billion. Justice is \$5 billion.

So the money matters, Madam Speaker, and that's why we need to get to the bottom. That's why we need to call a select committee, on which the members opposite will have three seats and the opportunity to ask the same questions, hear all the evidence and call for witnesses and documents.

1650

I'd like to quote the commission of financial inquiry, the other independent arm's-length purveyor of views on the government's expenditures: “In pursuing the appearance of a balanced budget, the government compromised the ability of its financial publications to support an informed debate over policy priorities and how best to spend limited dollars.” This is the independent commission of inquiry.

Let's go over that point one more time, Madam Speaker: “The government compromised the ability of its financial publications to support an informed debate over policy priorities and how best to spend limited dollars.”

It's our duty, all of us in this place, to have informed debate on matters of public consequence. It is obvious that for the past several years, the Legislature and the people of Ontario have not had the opportunity for open debate on the matter of public finances. That ends here with the select committee, as we find out what really happened and who was responsible.

Our government has inherited a very challenging financial situation. What we saw under the previous government was 15-year mismanaged spending that now is a \$15-billion deficit.

Interjection.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: That's a big number. I agree. That's a "wow." Thank you.

But shedding light on this hidden deficit is not on its own sufficient for the task of fixing it. In fact, this new transparency only serves to underscore the extent of the challenge in front of us.

Prior to entering public life, I spent a career in evaluating financial risk, and I've seen my fair share of balance sheets. The line items that I see in Ontario's balance sheet—some would ask, do they keep me up at night? I say, "No, I sleep like a baby: I wake up every two hours and I cry. That's how I feel."

Laughter.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Some people are listening. That's pretty good.

That is why my caucus colleagues and I are focused on bringing the rigour of business into the work of government, because we want everybody in Ontario, all almost 14 million people, to sleep well at night, to know that this House is respecting their taxpayer dollars, is watching their taxpayer dollars so we can protect the core services—the core areas of health care, the core areas of education, the core area of social services—in this great province.

In conclusion, I would just like to say to everyone here, this is a wake-up call. This is a sober accounting of where we've been for the last 15 years, a sober accounting comparing us to other jurisdictions. Now we need to get answers to find out what really happened and to make sure we never go there again.

I'm proud to be associated with this House and this party. We will do whatever it takes to get the job done.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Order, please.

I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on a point of order.

Hon. Steve Clark: Yes, a point of order, Madam Speaker: I wish to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 145, I have been designated the acting government House leader for this afternoon. I'm rising under standing order 56 to announce the government business for next week.

On Monday afternoon, the government currently intends to call government notice of motion 9:

"Mr. Smith, Bay of Quinte—That, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 4, An Act respecting the preparation of a climate change plan, providing for the wind down of the cap and trade program and repealing the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-Carbon Economy"—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Next item?

Hon. Steve Clark: Just give me a second, Speaker. It was just a very long motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you for the point of order.

Further debate? Further debate?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I will remind the members that when I stand, you sit. Thank you.

Mr. Vanthof has moved an amendment to government notice of motion number 8, relating to the allocation of time on government order number 6. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): "Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on the amendment to government notice of motion 8 be deferred until deferred votes on Monday, October 1, 2018."

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Orders of the day.

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Madam Speaker, I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 4, An Act respecting the preparation of a climate change plan, providing for the wind down of the cap and trade program and repealing the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act, 2016, when the bill is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That, at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on General Government; and

That the Standing Committee on General Government be authorized to meet on Monday, October 15, 2018, and Wednesday, October 17, 2018, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. for public hearings on the bill; and

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 4:

That the deadline for requests to appear be 9 a.m. on Tuesday, October 9, 2018; and

That, the Clerk of the Committee provide a list of all interested presenters to each member of the subcommittee and the independent member of the committee, following the deadline for requests to appear by 3 p.m. on Tuesday, October 9, 2018; and

That, each member of the subcommittee and the independent member of the committee provide the Clerk of the Committee with a prioritized list of presenters to be scheduled, chosen from the list of all interested presenters received by the Clerk by 5 p.m. on Thursday, October 11, 2018; and

That, one selection of the independent member of the committee be scheduled by the Clerk of the Committee for each day of public hearings.

That each witness will receive up to 10 minutes for their presentation followed by 10 minutes for questions from committee members with two minutes allotted to the independent member of the committee for questioning and eight minutes divided equally amongst the recognized parties for questioning; and

That the deadline for filing written submissions be 6 p.m. on Wednesday, October 17, 2018; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 12 p.m. on Friday, October 19, 2018; and

That the Standing Committee on General Government shall be authorized to meet on Monday, October 22, 2018, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., and Wednesday, October 24, 2018, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

1700

That on Wednesday, October 24, 2018, at 5:30 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the Committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. At this time, the Chair shall allow one 20-minute waiting period pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Thursday, October 25, 2018.

In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

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

That, when the order for third reading of the bill is called, two and one-half hours of debate shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill with one hour allotted to the government; one hour allotted to Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition; twenty minutes to the independent Liberal members, and ten minutes allotted to the independent Green member; and

That at the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That, notwithstanding standing order 81(c), the bill may be called more than once in the same sessional day; and

That the vote on third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 10 minutes.

And that's all I've got.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Mr. Bethlenfalvy has moved government notice of motion number 9. Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the member from London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Point of order, Speaker: The member read the motion so quickly. We didn't get a copy of the motion to actually follow along. Is it possible for you to read it again?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The notice of motion is on the order paper for members to be able to review.

Further debate?

Mr. Dave Smith: Back on June 7, the people of Ontario decided that they wanted to have change. They wanted to have a government that was looking after the people, a government that was going to get things done and was going to do things. They recognized that they were having a hard time, because things got very expensive.

One of the things that we know is that cap-and-trade added significant costs to everything. One of the purposes of cap-and-trade was to change discretionary travel. It made gasoline more expensive. The idea behind that was that we would drive our vehicles less, that we wouldn't be hopping in our car and going for a Sunday drive, so to speak. The problem with this, Madam Speaker, is that it's not just discretionary travel that got to be that much more expensive.

I have one gentleman in particular in my riding. He is disabled. He requires kidney dialysis. He doesn't live in the city of Peterborough. In the small town that he lives in, they don't have dialysis, so he was required to come into the Peterborough regional hospital for that dialysis on a weekly basis. He was blind, Madam Speaker, so of course he didn't have a driver's licence and wasn't able to drive himself. Because he lived in a rural part of our province, there wasn't public transit. There wasn't an option for him to ride the bus, because the bus simply did not come to Peterborough.

I've had a number of people say to me over the past three months that we don't need to drive as much; we can ride our bikes or we can walk. This gentleman lives 72 kilometres from the hospital, so walking was not an option, nor was riding his bike. And I'm not sure that I want someone who is legally blind riding their bike on the highway, especially a highway like Highway 7, where it's fairly busy. He relied on taxis to bring him into Peterborough for his life-sustaining kidney dialysis. This was not discretionary travel; this was life-sustaining travel that he required.

Cap-and-trade added a mere \$5 to each trip into Peterborough. Now, I recall the Premier at the time talking about this and how it was only going to be \$5 more or maybe \$6 more per month for cap-and-trade. It was something that we could bear, that cost. But, Madam Speaker, this gentleman is on ODSP. He had no way of bringing that cost down. He had no way to offset that cost—an

additional \$20 per month, \$25 in the months where there were five weeks. He had to come in for his life-sustaining kidney dialysis. Cap-and-trade added to his burden \$20 to \$25 a month.

For a lot of us here, \$20 a month isn't that big of a deal. That's a coffee a week, maybe two coffees per week. We're not going to Tim Hortons. Instead, we make slight adjustments. That was not an option for this gentleman. Instead, he had to make choices on things that he was going to have, like food or clothing. That's not the appropriate way for the government to act. Cap-and-trade punished him, punished him needlessly. We know that. That's not fair and reasonable.

The government of Ontario is here to make life easier for people in this province. We make decisions that affect so many people, and we have to make wise decisions. We need to act when it's appropriate to act. One of the things that we need to make sure we're doing is getting rid of cap-and-trade, because it punishes the people of Ontario.

We were sold a bill of goods by the Liberals. We were told that we were going to be punishing the polluters; the polluters were the ones who were going to pay. And that rhetoric sounds wonderful: Let's punish those who are polluting. But the reality is that they passed that cost, that expense, on to the customer, and that comes down to the average person in Ontario. So the average person in Ontario is the one who is punished by this. It's not the polluters.

Cap-and-trade was going to do a number of different things for us as well. By taking money from those polluters, we were going to send it to other jurisdictions to buy credits from them. That takes money out of our economy. I believe it was \$475 million that went to California in one quarter through cap-and-trade. That's money that could have been spent in Ontario. That's money that the taxpayers of Ontario could have had, and they did not. By removing cap-and-trade, we're saving the average person in Ontario \$260—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. I just want to take a moment to recognize a former MPP who was just in the House, but seems to have vanished: Arthur Potts, who was the MPP for Beaches–East York in the 41st Parliament.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you. As the government, we need to make sure that we learn from our mistakes. We need to make sure that we don't repeat those mistakes.

Earlier on today, I had a quote from Cicero. I love Cicero. I'm going to give another quote from him: "Any man can make a mistake, but only a fool persists in that error." We know that cap-and-trade was a mistake. Let's not be foolish and continue with that error. Let's remove that error and start over afresh.

1710

Another person I admired greatly—I'm going to give a quote from him: "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

Interjection.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm sorry?

Sorry, let me start over: "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." It was Winston Churchill who said that. Our government is giving hope back to the taxpayer. We are giving money back to the families: \$260 from the cap-and-trade cancellation. We're giving the people of Ontario back their own money so that they can do what they need to do with it.

We have seen the effects of cap-and-trade. We know that it is a regressive tax. We know that any carbon tax hurts. Even the federal government that had come out and mandated they were going to have a significantly higher carbon tax imposed have come forward and said that perhaps they were too harsh and they are now looking at reducing that amount from \$50 a tonne to \$20 a tonne. Even the federal Liberals are recognizing that cap-and-trade carbon taxes, or any type of a carbon tax that way, hurt the people of Ontario.

By repealing cap-and-trade, we have lowered gas prices. Some in the opposition have said, "No, that is not the case. It's the time of year. When they change from summer gas to winter gas, gasoline prices go down. Removing the cap-and-trade had no effect on that."

Last year, at the beginning of September in Peterborough, gasoline was selling at an average of 127.9 per litre for regular gas. At the end of September, once we had switched over to the winter gas, it was 124.9, a five-cent savings. Now the NDP have said that that five-cent savings is because of the switch in gas. I will freely admit there was a drop last year of five cents when we switched from summer gas to winter gas.

Three weeks ago in Peterborough, the gas prices were 122.6, 122.9, 122.9 and 121.9 on one strip. Today, after we have made the switch to the winter blend of gasoline and with the reduction because of the removal of cap-and-trade—keep in mind that last year, it was about a three- or four-cent drop—it's 108.6, 108.9, 108.9 and 109.6. Last year, there was a five-cent drop. This year, we are seeing a 13-cent drop. You cannot simply say that is the switch from summer to winter. Today in my riding, the removal of cap-and-trade on the price of gasoline is saving people a significant amount of money.

There are many people who will come forward and say, "But Mr. Smith, we don't need gasoline. We could have electric cars we can drive. We can ride our bicycles. There are other ways of doing it. We don't need to have the internal combustion engine. We can get around that."

There are people in my riding who live 135 kilometres from my office. Most electric vehicles will travel about 260 kilometres on a charge. It's 270 kilometres for a round trip to my office. They can't come in to see me with an electric vehicle. We would be telling people in Ontario that it's not appropriate, then, for them to travel to their MPP if we only had electric vehicles. We cannot at the moment get rid of gasoline cars. It's not possible. A large portion of my riding, about 46%, is rural. We have a very large farming industry. I've yet to see an electric tractor or an electric combine. I've yet to see that. They don't exist. They don't exist because the technology is not there.

Until we're in a position where we have viable options, we can't remove gasoline or fossil fuels. It is unfortunate. I wish we were in a different position, but we're not yet. A more intelligent approach to it, then, is to get away from taxing the demand and finding a different supply.

There's a very solid theory in economics: Supply and demand will determine what the price is. We're artificially raising prices through cap-and-trade. That doesn't change what the actual demand is. The demand is there, unfortunately, for the internal combustion engine because we have a very vast country. We have a very large population of rural people who do not have the option of riding their bicycle 135 kilometres to come and see me. They do not have the option of driving 270 kilometres on a round trip in a vehicle that cannot travel 270 kilometres. That's not an effective way of doing things.

We have to look at different options, and that's what this government is doing. We're presenting a different option. We know that we can make changes that will be positive to the environment. We know that it is possible to both be economically friendly and environmentally friendly, and we have to take that type of approach, and it is incumbent upon us to take that approach as quickly as possible.

There are a number of other things that we need to address when it comes to cap-and-trade, and we need to do it as quickly as possible. That's why we're asking for this time allocation. That's why we want to get this to committee as soon as possible: so that we can get the feedback from the people who are there, the people who are dealing with this on a daily basis, the people who are suffering. We need to know: What can we do differently? How can we make their lives easier? It is incumbent on us, as the Legislature, to make sure that life is easier for the people of Ontario. We can't be in a position where we're making changes that negatively affect the lives of people in this province. We have to do things in a way that makes life easier for people in this province.

Carbon taxes do not curb emissions. They simply take money out of our pocket. They take money out of the economy. They destroy our comparative advantage over other jurisdictions. They put people out of work. They make life harder for people in Ontario, and definitely businesses. If the businesses do not succeed, employees do not have jobs.

Philip Cross had an opinion piece in the Toronto Star—and I'd like to point out, it's the Toronto Star, which is not a friend of the Progressive Conservatives. The Toronto Star has attacked us at every opportunity, and yet this opinion piece was in there. "When first proposed, a carbon tax had the potential to be an effective way of achieving the long-term goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

"However, its introduction and the ongoing campaign conducted by advocates have become so politicized and corrupted by ideology that it is no longer politically tenable, while rising oil prices reduce its economic necessity.

"To achieve the goal of curtailing fossil fuel use enough to meet the Paris climate agreement, our current technology requires carbon taxes so high that they are a political

non-starter." This is from Philip Cross: "To achieve the goal of curtailing fossil fuel use enough to meet the Paris climate agreement, our current technology requires carbon taxes so high they are a political non-starter. Proponents of a carbon tax seem to increasingly agree."

1720

The federal government has already come out in agreement with this, in essence. By reducing what they originally set as the price from \$50 to \$20 a tonne, they're in agreement with this.

"Instead of a major overhaul to the efficiency of the tax system, supporters now meekly argue that a carbon tax is just one of a wide range of solutions (the federal environment minister recently was reduced to pledging to plant more trees to make its climate change plan palatable to the public)."

Think about that for a moment. The federal government that has been saying all along that we need to increase taxes on people in order to reach our climate change targets has come back and said, "Maybe we were wrong on that. Maybe a more effective approach is to plant more trees, because the trees will help remove the greenhouse gases." I think that's very interesting to point out: The federal government, the ones who have been saying all along \$50 a tonne, are now down to \$20, and they are saying, "Let's plant more trees."

"Small carbon taxes are not a serious proposal to curb emissions, but the equivalent of buying a papal indulgence to alleviate our collective conscience with a largely symbolic gesture to climate change action."

Let's review that for a second again. Small carbon taxes do nothing more than make us feel good that we're doing something. They don't actually do something effective; they just make us feel good. Feeling good for that brief moment doesn't put money back into the pockets of the average person in Ontario. Feeling good for that moment doesn't help business in Ontario stay in Ontario. Instead, that carbon tax makes us less competitive and it drives business out. It takes away the jobs from the people that we are here to help. It takes away from their ability to provide the good quality life that they want.

"Waning interest in a carbon tax is not necessarily a bad thing for the environment. Even without a meaningful carbon tax, fuel prices across North America are at, or near, record highs this summer"—which is true. We were paying \$1.30 at times, sometimes slightly more than that for a litre of gasoline. That was without high carbon taxes. That was just with the cap-and-trade.

"High prices have not always proved the best way of promoting energy efficiency. Significant progress has been made using other tools.

"Mandatory mileage standards for vehicles have resulted in dramatic increases in fuel efficiency...." We joke about it, my wife and I. She has a Mini Cooper. I used to have a GMC Sierra. We could drive the Mini Cooper to Montreal from Peterborough and back on a single tank of gas, 802 kilometres. At the time, it was about \$43 to fill up her car. We joked about it because the Mini Cooper would fit in the back of my GMC Sierra. We laughed and said a

number of times that, really, it could be the escape pod or my shuttlecraft to my Starship Enterprise.

“Most fatally for the carbon tax, it has become politicalized. In its early days, people on both the left and the right of the political spectrum supported a carbon tax. Conservative leaders such as Patrick Brown and Jim Prentice advocated versions of the carbon tax. Now their heirs in Ontario and Alberta have joined a number of conservative parties opposing it, including at the federal level.”

Ontario will oppose a federally imposed carbon tax. The carbon tax is one of the most regressive taxes that our country has ever seen, and we are not going to let the federal government put that burden on the taxpayers of Ontario. It provides no value to the taxpayers of Ontario, so we’re not going to allow that to happen.

“Why are conservatives increasingly united in opposing a carbon tax? Partly because their long-standing suspicions that the carbon tax would become another government tax grab” have been confirmed. It’s a slush fund. It’s a slush fund for ideological projects. We saw that with cap-and-trade in Ontario: \$2.2 billion was taken out of our economy through it, and what was the benefit to Ontario?

Interjection.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you very much to the government House leader’s office. They have given me a cough drop. Ahem. Excuse me.

“Poisoning the bipartisan well of support for a carbon tax reduces its effectiveness. The public increasingly treats such taxes as transitory, to be reduced or removed when conservative governments are elected”—and we’ve done just that. We have introduced legislation to remove that regressive tax. It hurts the people of Ontario.

We know that right now in the United States, in many different states in the United States, they are doing things to reduce the tax burden there. They are making a more competitive environment for their businesses, for their industries. In my town alone, in the city of Peterborough, General Electric, after having been there for 127 years, is closing up shop. They have moved their production to the US, because it is a more conducive environment for them to operate from. Carbon taxes hurt people. They don’t help.

We need to protect the environment. Absolutely we need to protect the environment. We need to do everything reasonable to do so. But what we can’t do is destroy the economy. We cannot take away the opportunity for the people of Ontario to live a good life. We cannot take away their ability to be employed because companies leave.

There is a way of doing this. It is possible to have a strong economy that is environmentally friendly. We know this. One of the things that was drilled into us while I was taking my MBA was that there are three pillars that have to be taken into account with all industries. We have to be healthy in all three of those. There’s a humanitarian side that must be healthy, there’s an economic side that must be healthy, and there is an environmental side that must be healthy. If you don’t have health in all three, you do not have a sustainable company. Ontario needs to make sure that it has health in all three of those pillars. We have to have a sustainable economy, we have to look after the

welfare of the people of this province, and we have to make sure that everything we do is good for the environment, that it doesn’t cause additional stress to the environment, that it doesn’t create a province that’s not sustainable for our future children.

I got into politics because I have three kids. I wanted them to have the opportunities that I had growing up. They won’t have those opportunities if we continue down the path that we have been going down. We cannot add to the tax burden for the people in Ontario. By removing cap-and-trade, we know that we are freeing up, on average, \$260 for every single family in this province, \$260 that they will get to choose how they want to spend, \$260 that will be put back into the economy of Ontario, not transferred to California.

The federal government has decided they are going to plant more trees. That is wonderful. Let’s plant more of them in Ontario rather than sending money to California for them to do it.

Cap-and-trade was not an effective way of reducing emissions. In fact, it didn’t reduce emissions in Ontario the way it was being sold to us.

1730

How cap-and-trade worked: Companies in other jurisdictions would reduce their emissions and they would get something called a carbon credit that industry in Ontario could then buy. They did not change the behaviour in Ontario; the behaviour was changed in the past by someone else, somewhere else. There was no positive effect in Ontario from it. Industry didn’t have to make any changes.

I know we have a number of people who live in the Sudbury area. Let’s take a look at Sudbury as a prime example. There was a time in Sudbury when there was a lot of brown space. The smelting industry did a great deal of polluting at one point. There were changes that were made, though—and this is an example that we should be looking to, something that we can take and build on in Ontario. Scrubbers were put on the smokestacks of those smelting companies, and they captured some of those emissions. They took those captured emissions and, as a business, they learned from it. They used those captured emissions to create the acid for car batteries. They actually make more money today producing car batteries than they do from smelting iron.

Business figured that out. They found a secondary market. They found another product by being environmentally friendly. That’s an effective way to do things. That’s what we should be looking at and trying to emulate moving forward.

In my riding, I have one business in particular, one businessman in particular, that I think is brilliant. We need to have him come down to Queen’s Park to speak to all of us about his business plan. He owns an aggregate company—rocks. It doesn’t sound like it would be that big of a deal. How is that going to help the environment? How is that going to help the economy? They use some of those rocks, after they have been crushed significantly, to make asphalt shingles. He has a factory that does that. That

factory produces waste, so he has added onto it a secondary business where he's sharing resources. He makes methanol, methanol that is used in vehicles.

There's an offshoot product from that. It generates a lot of steam when he's making his methanol. What they have applied to use that steam for is a hydroelectric plant, because that steam can be used to turn turbines. So he's taking an aggregate company he has built onto to have a shingle company, and it's the offshoot, the waste product from his aggregate, that is now being used to produce another product; and the waste from that product is being used to create a third business. All of that waste that would have been thrown out is now being reused, and it's much more efficient.

The steam that he's producing: He has had to add some boilers to it to get the electrical system working properly, but more than 75% of the steam used to generate that electricity comes from the waste. It's a very effective way of doing it. That's the type of approach that we need to take in Ontario. How can we have complementary businesses so that the waste isn't waste, so that it is not damaging the rest of the environment, so that it is being used in an intelligent way? If we get out of the way of business, if we reduce the red tape, if we cut back those punitive regulations, we can have businesses be successful, provide employment in this province and do great things for the people. But instead, ideology gets in the way.

Cap-and-trade is one of those ideological approaches that has damaged this province. I simply hope that we're at a point where we can reverse that damage quickly enough so that we don't have a comparative disadvantage with other jurisdictions any longer, so that Ontario is open for business, so that we can do things like reduce the debt, so that we can bring that \$15-billion deficit to zero and so that we can make life easier for the people of this province. We can't do that by imposing taxes like cap-and-trade.

We need to get this to committee quickly. We need to get those people who want the input, who can help this province; we need to get them to the committee to speak so that they can share those ideas and so that we, as a Legislature, can move forward in a way that does good things for this province.

We should not have people in our ridings who have to travel more than half an hour to come for dialysis and be punished because of it. That gentleman is disadvantaged enough as it is, and we made it harder for him with no additional support. There was no thought put into how that was going to affect our marginalized people. Cap-and-trade hurts the marginalized in this province more than it hurts anyone else, at a much, much higher rate.

Those who don't have the financial ability to absorb those additional costs have to cut things in their lives that they need, like heat, like housing, like clothing, like food. An added burden is put on top of our most vulnerable through cap-and-trade. It's not a fair tax. It's a regressive tax that hurts all of those people in the province whom we're trying to help.

It's a small amount each time. It's simple things, like when they go to the grocery store and they're buying fresh

fruit or fresh vegetables—we live in Ontario. Great things grow in Ontario. We have exceptional farms in Ontario. But one of the things that I know and that cannot be argued: In January, under a foot of snow, we're not growing fresh produce. In February, under a foot and a half of snow, we do not have fresh fruit growing. All of that, all of the fresh produce and all of the fresh fruit, is trucked into Ontario in the winter.

We need our people to be eating healthy foods, but cap-and-trade adds to that cost. It adds to the cost of everything that people buy in this province. The grocery store does not grow the food. The grocery store does not make produce. The grocery store does not have cows in the back that they're milking to provide dairy products. It's all brought in, and it's all more expensive because of cap-and-trade. Removing that regressive tax will help the people of Ontario.

Even Kentucky Fried Chicken has to have their chicken trucked into the restaurants, and that's more expensive. We can't have those types of things. We have to reduce the cost of everything in Ontario. By getting rid of cap-and-trade, we are reducing the costs of every single thing in this province.

Cap-and-trade adds to the cost of all oil products. A lot of people have said to me, "Dave, I don't drive a car. Cap-and-trade doesn't affect me." Cap-and-trade does. When you look around at what we have and what we use in this province, there are so many things that are petroleum-based—plastic bags, for example. There are times where you're not able to use a paper bag. It may be something that is wet; it could be something that is leaking and you have to have a plastic bag for it. Plastic bags are more expensive because they're based on petroleum products. Petroleum products are more expensive.

If we look in this room, the carpet that we're standing on has petroleum products in it. It's more expensive. If we were to replace this, because of cap-and-trade the carpet in this room would be more expensive. The microphones that we're using are based on petroleum products. Anything that is plastic-based is based on a petroleum product. It's more expensive because of cap-and-trade, and we can't have that.

1740

We have to reduce the burden that we have on the taxpayer of Ontario. We have to make sure that the people of this province have the ability to live the lives that they want to live, that they deserve to live. By taking more than \$260 out of their pockets every year and sending it to jurisdictions like California, we're not making life easier for the people in this province. That has to change.

We have been elected to make a positive change in this province. We have been elected to change the direction. The former governing party has been eradicated. They are no longer an official party. They're no longer an official party because they made foolish mistakes like cap-and-trade. I'm going to come back to that one quote again—let me find it—from Cicero: "Any man can make a mistake, but only a fool persists in his error." We cannot persist in the error of cap-and-trade.

The carbon tax era in this province is over. We are no longer going to be putting that burden on the people of this great province. We are doing things to raise them up. We're empowering the people. It's incumbent upon us to get this bill to committee as quickly as possible so that all of those great ideas that this people in this province have can come to us. We can take that and we can make sure that what we're doing moving forward is in the best interest of the people in Ontario.

We have a mantra. The governing party has talked about this a number of times. All of us have something on our desk: "For the people." This is a decision that is for the people of Ontario. This is not padding the pockets of Liberal insiders. This is not giving money to a different jurisdiction. This is not the transfer of wealth from Ontario to California. It's building the wealth of Ontario again. It's reinvesting in our people. It's making sure that we have the good jobs back in Ontario so that the people of Ontario have the ability to work. It's so the people of Ontario have extra money in their pockets and they can do more with it. If every person in this province had an extra \$260 that they could spend in this province, that's a massive amount of money. That's billions of dollars that come back into our economy. That drives the economy. That puts more people back to work. It gives more people money. It's a spiral upward, instead of the downward spiral that we have been on for the last 15 years.

Two hundred and sixty dollars doesn't sound like an awful lot. It's only about \$20 a month. It's only about two coffees a week, if you're going to Tim Hortons, or a coffee and a doughnut a week. But my point is, if we were to do that, if we were to spend that \$20 a month that we have now as a result of cancelling cap-and-trade, the residual effect is much greater.

Texas A&M did a study a number of years ago, back in the 1980s and 1990s. What they found was that an increase in discretionary spending—they defined discretionary spending as spending that wasn't for housing, that wasn't for clothing, that wasn't for food. It was entertainment spending; it was buying books; it was doing things with their families. Discretionary spending results in a 4.3 multiplier. For every dollar an individual spent in discretionary spending, it resulted in an impact of \$4.30. By giving \$260 to each person, to each family in Ontario by cancelling cap-and-trade, if they use that money, that's more than \$1,000 that actually comes back into the economy in Ontario. Think about that for a second. We're investing in the people of this province. We're investing in the economy of this province. We're taking \$260 and we're turning it into more than \$1,000 of economic impact. That is a wise decision. That is a very wise decision.

If all of our ministries were able to do that, imagine how great this province would be, how wealthy everyone in this province would be. We wouldn't have problems with homelessness. We wouldn't have problems with housing. We wouldn't have problems with transportation. We wouldn't have problems with infrastructure. Because that

money would be coming back into the province, and it would be spent back in this province.

People have said to me, "But Dave, if you're going to give them \$260 back through cap-and-trade, where is that money coming from that you're talking about?" But it's the spiral upward. When they're buying things, when they're doing more, it does add to our government tax revenue through the sales tax side. But they get to choose how they're spending that money. The government isn't saying, "We're going to take money from you and we're going to give it to California." What the government is saying in this case, what the Ford government is saying in this case is, "We're not going to take that money from you. It's your money. You decide how to spend it."

Our job in the Legislature is to regulate to the point of integrity; it is not to regulate to the point of interference. We have been interfering in the lives of people in Ontario for 15 years now, and that ends. That ends when this bill is passed. When this bill comes through committee, and we've gotten all of the feedback from the people, and we've brought it back up here and third reading is done and it receives royal assent, we're giving money back to everyone in this province. That's what the government should do: make life easier for the people who live in Ontario and stop making life harder for people.

We've seen 15 years of mismanagement. We've seen \$15 billion in deficit and \$338 billion worth of debt because of foolish decisions. I come back to Cicero again. I can't say it enough: A man can make a mistake. We accept that the Liberal government made mistakes. They made many mistakes. They continued to compound those mistakes. But only a fool persists in his error. We're not going to persist in that error.

The people of Ontario have said, "Do not persist in that error." On June 7, they elected 76 Progressive Conservatives because they knew there had been significant errors made by the previous government and that had to end—ahem. Excuse me.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Order, please.

Mr. Dave Smith: Sorry, Madam Speaker. Ahem. I said this morning that I was coming down with a cold, that the decisions that were made by the Liberals make me sick, and it's true; they do make me sick. I'm standing proof of it right now. We're talking about a decision that the Liberals have made and that we're reversing, and I'm having trouble because I'm sick from it.

This needs to change. We need to chart a new path in Ontario. We've started the charting of that path. We're moving forward in a way that helps the people of this province. I ask my NDP friends—

Interjection: Friends?

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm calling you my friends. You are my friends. We're here for the same reasons. We're here to make life easier for those in Ontario.

1750

Now, there are differences of opinion on how we do that, but I ask you—take a step back and think about this—

is it better to let the people have their money and decide what they're going to do with it, or is it better to take their money and continue taking their money? I said it already today. There has to be a way of doing things that is both good for humanity, good for the economy and good for the environment. A business is only sustainable when it takes that three-pillared approach. It's one of the things that is talked about significantly all throughout a master of business administration course. We know that.

Some of the most successful companies are the companies that take that approach. Sir Richard Branson takes that approach. He has said repeatedly that your customers are not your most valuable asset. What he has said is that your employees are your most valuable asset, because if you look after your employees, they look after your customers. If your customers are satisfied and if they get the products they need, the service they need, they do very, very well. Your business will do well.

That's an approach that we need to take. We need to make sure that we're giving the money to the people of Ontario. They're the ones we are looking after. We need to make sure they get the opportunity to spend their money the way they choose to spend it. We can't find ourselves in a position where we no longer have a comparative advantage over other jurisdictions. That's happened. The comparative advantage has been lost.

There was a time when electrical prices in Ontario were the lowest of any jurisdiction in North America. That time has gone. We are less competitive because of it. Energy is something that all industry uses. By removing cap-and-trade, by taking that burden off, we're allowing our industry to be more competitive. We're giving the people the ability to get jobs again. We're raising them up. We're raising their standard of living. And we'll do it in a way that is economically viable, that is respectful of the humanitarian side and, very importantly, is environmentally respectful. No business in Ontario will survive if it doesn't consider the economy, if it doesn't consider the environment.

We're asking businesses to consider the environment and to do it in a way that doesn't harm this province. That's the right approach. We have significant proof that it works. We know that the smelting industry in Sudbury is alive and well. They're a wonderful example that we can take. It's something that was very polluting. It was something that caused a great deal of environmental damage, and they changed; business changed. They changed their approach, they captured those emissions, they created a secondary product from it and they're very successful. They make more money from the secondary product.

That's the approach that Ontario needs to take. We need to make sure that we have clean-tech industries. We need to make sure that those clean-tech industries have the ability to grow and flourish in this province. Cap-and-trade does not do that for them.

Trent University is another perfect example. Trent University is partnering and creating something called Clean-

tech Commons. The Cleantech Commons will bring industry into Ontario. We will be industry leaders in environmentally friendly ways of doing business. That partnership does so much for us because it provides opportunities for our students to learn more effective and appropriate ways of running business, keeping the three pillars in perspective. That's the type of thing that we should be investing in, not sending money to California.

Now, I know I've mentioned California a number of times. I'm sure it is a wonderful place. I'm sure that they have great people there. But I believe that the people of Ontario is where the Ontario government should be putting its money. I believe that the money the people of Ontario give to us to help them should be spent on them, and I believe that we should be taking the least amount possible from them.

We must be more effective in how we tax. We must be more effective in what we do. We need to spend our money wisely. We cannot continue to add to the burden of those who don't have the ability to pay.

That's what the carbon tax did. The carbon tax made life significantly harder for the average person in Ontario. It made life harder for those who are marginalized. It made life harder for those who do not have the ability to pay. It did not punish the polluters; it punished Rodney, it punished Savannah, and it punished Derek. These are all people I know very, very well. They are part of that marginalized group. They are the ones who felt the pain. We can't continue down that path. We have to change the approach.

Getting this to committee as quickly as possible is the right approach. Finding a way to have the feedback from the people, who can make a difference, who can give us those ideas—you can't make an informed decision if you don't have the information. Getting this to committee, so that those who have the information can give it to us, will make it better for Ontario. Once the committee has this information, once the committee has the bill in front of them, we will be able to get that feedback from people.

The committee that this is going to is made up of 11 people from this Legislature, 11 intelligent people who have the best interests of this province at heart. We may have differences of opinion on some things, but all of us are here to make life easier for the people in this province. That's what we're doing. Killing cap-and-trade makes life easier.

Let's get this to committee as soon as we can. Let's get the feedback. Let's get the input. Let's make the revisions that we need to make to make it better so that the people of this province rise up, so that the people of this province have the ability to live the lives that they want to live, so that the people of this province—the good people who put us here to make decisions for them, to help them—have faith and belief in what we're doing. The sooner we get the feedback from them, the better it will be. Getting this bill down to the committee, starting on October 15, is the most appropriate way of doing it. We shouldn't be delaying any

longer. We need to get that feedback. We need to have the people of this province giving the feedback to us.

Interjections.

Mr. Dave Smith: The members of the NDP can heckle me all they want. They know I'm right. They know that we have to have a better future for the people of Ontario. They know that they've been elected here to make life easier for the people of Ontario. Cancelling cap-and-trade will do that. Getting it to committee sooner will make sure that we make life easier for the people of Ontario. Making life easier for the people of Ontario is what we're here to do.

I ask you to please work with me on this. Help me help Ontario. Help me help the people who elected you to represent them. Help the people of your own ridings. Give them the opportunity to rise up from where they are. Give them the opportunity to spend the money the way they choose to spend it.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday, October 1 at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott
Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Tonia Grannum, Valerie Quioc Lim, William Short
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

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 COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Wayne Gates
Stan Cho, Jill Dunlop
John Fraser, Wayne Gates
Stephen Lecce, Gila Martow
Jane McKenna, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Lindsey Park, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Timothy Bryan

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Stephen Crawford
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
Ian Arthur, Stan Cho
Stephen Crawford, Doug Downey
Sol Mamakwa, David Piccini
Jeremy Roberts, Sandy Shaw
Donna Skelly
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Timothy Bryan

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Dave Smith
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Jessica Bell, Lorne Coe
Chris Glover, Christine Hogarth
Logan Kanapathi, Daryl Kramp
Natalia Kusendova, Amarjot Sandhu
Mike Schreiner, Dave Smith
Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: John Vanthof
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Roman Baber, Rudy Cuzzetto
Amy Fee, Vincent Ke
Andrea Khanjin, Marie-France Lalonde
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Jeremy Roberts, Marit Stiles
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Parm Gill
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Roman Baber, Aris Babikian
Nathalie Des Rosiers, Jill Dunlop
Parm Gill, Lindsey Park
Ross Romano, Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria
Sara Singh, Monique Taylor
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Présidente: Jane McKenna
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam
Robert Bailey, Rima Berns-McGown
Michael Coteau, Mike Harris
Faisal Hassan, Jane McKenna
Christina Maria Mitas, Sam Oosterhoff
Amanda Simard, Gurratan Singh
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Présidente: Catherine Fife
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Peggy Sattler
Catherine Fife, Goldie Ghamari
Jim McDonnell, Norman Miller
Suze Morrison, Michael Parsa
Peggy Sattler, Kinga Surma
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Randy Hillier
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kaleed Rasheed
Toby Barrett, Will Bouma
Mike Harris, Randy Hillier
Mitzie Hunter, Laura Mae Lindo
Paul Miller, Billy Pang
Kaleed Rasheed, Amarjot Sandhu
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Présidente: Nina Tangri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Deepak Anand
Deepak Anand, Doly Begum
Jeff Burch, Amy Fee
Michael Gravelle, Joel Harden
Belinda Karahalios, Robin Martin
Sheref Sabawy, Nina Tangri
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie