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21 février 2019

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Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 21 February 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 21 février 2019

The House met at 0900.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 20, 2019, on the motion for time allocation of the following bill:

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

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: Of course, I'm very pleased to rise today. This week is basically my fifth-year anniversary of being here in the Legislature and representing the people of Thornhill. It's an honour; it's a privilege. It has been a big learning curve. I didn't have a background in law. I didn't have a career that involved a lot of public speaking. It has been a challenge at times, but it has also been very rewarding.

One of the things I learned very early on is that there is a lot of terminology here that we don't normally use in everyday life in most professions. One of those terms is "time allocation."

Time allocation: It can almost sound like it's meaning the opposite of what it actually means. Basically, we want to get moving on a bill so quickly that we're discussing whether or not the bill should be moving forward quicker than the standing orders normally suggest. We want to get things done.

We're talking about making our classes safer—a safer place for children, obviously, but also a safer place for all the professionals and staff in schools—and making parents feel comfortable as well. That's not something we want to delay.

It's obvious that we had one of the longest and most thorough public consultations on our education system, basically on the curriculum that we're trying to make improvements on. The consultations went from September 28, 2018, all the way until December 15. The NDP and some of their constituents, their supporters, their volunteers, and even their staff, professionals that they interact with—I'm sure that they participated in those consultations.

So I think we've basically given everybody in Ontario—and because it was online, I'm sure some people outside of Ontario managed to weigh in as well, to give us

their opinions and their suggestions. I think that's probably the most rewarding part of this career: to represent residents and to hear from them what their concerns are, but also what their suggestions are. That's sort of what we learn to do after we're elected. We're always hearing peoples' concerns and complaints, but I think we learn very quickly to say to them, "And what are your suggestions?" It's very easy, as we all know, to complain and to have concerns, but, "What are you going to do? What are you going to recommend? How are we going to move this forward? How do we have your support?"

One of the things that disturbed me that we don't discuss very often here in terms of our public school system is that parents sometimes, when either they are not comfortable with the curriculum or they are concerned about their child's safety in the school or something like that, choose to take their child out of the school. That's their prerogative. They can choose some type of private school. There are a lot in Ontario; unfortunately, some of them are even thriving because of parental concerns. But some parents cannot, obviously, afford that option and choose to home-school their children. Now, if that's the parents' choice and they had always planned to home-school their children, and maybe one of the parents has even a background in teaching, like the Speaker who's sitting in the chair today, that's one thing, if that was their plan. But when I hear that there were hundreds and possibly thousands of children pulled out of our public school system to be home-schooled, all because parents didn't feel consulted and didn't feel comfortable, then that's a big problem for me.

I know it doesn't exactly correlate to that discussion, but I can remember my father saying to me that he wanted to rent and maybe think about buying some kind of country house or cottage. In Quebec, we called it a country house, a "chalet." He said to all of his four children, "Well, that means you won't go to overnight camp, because obviously we're not going to pay for you to go to overnight camp for a month in the summer and then have this cottage sitting here without any children at it." I would answer the loudest and the quickest: "Forget that idea. I would rather be at summer camp with my friends than at a cottage with you." It was a little bit tough for him to hear. He would try again year after year for a number of years to convince me it was a better idea.

When I think about children being home-schooled, I'm very supportive. I certainly understand that parents have that prerogative. I'm sure that they interact with other families and ensure that their children have some kind of extracurricular activities. But when some parents don't

plan to home-school, don't want to home-school, but are doing it because they weren't comfortable and didn't feel consulted, I have a problem with that, because if you don't want to be doing something, we know that chances are it's not going to be an ideal situation.

I like to hear of kids being involved with their families in the public school system. I think that my kids benefited because I was a bit involved in their schooling. I think it's important for parents to feel involved in the school, to know who the teachers are and to participate if there are events at the school. I think we're all very aware that some schools have a thriving parent network, and that benefits the children.

We heard just this week—I want to quote the minister and compliment Minister Thompson, whose bill we're debating time allocation on. She said in a tweet just this week, "Bill 48 passed second reading yesterday. Thank you to all members who voted in favour of better access to service animals in schools, supporting teachers to be better prepared to teach the fundamentals of math, and zero tolerance for sexual abuse towards students." I think that sums up the main aspects of what we're trying to improve here.

It's challenging. There are always going to be sort of little unintended bumps in the road. There are unintended consequences that we all have to deal with, but I think that we recognize, moving forward, that we have an amazing province. We are very fortunate to all live in one of the best provinces in one of the best countries. Nothing could not use a second look or improvements. There are some concerns that we've heard from various sectors, not necessarily just educators. Various sectors have weighed in on our public school system, and I'm sure that some of them participated in those 72,000 responses we got when we did our vast, vast public consultation. We heard from students, parents, teachers, administrators, school boards, unions and community agencies.

0910

I bet that there were a lot of business community members who also weighed in, and they have their concerns. We specifically hear often that our students aren't getting the background in math that they need to do the STEM courses—to do the science and technology courses that we need them to do in order to do those high-tech jobs of the future. We want our students to have meaningful employment and meaningful careers. The best way to do that is to start with good foundations in terms of their schooling and their education.

We want our students to be healthy. We want our students to be happy. We want our students to be safe, and we want our students to feel part of a community. I think that that's our challenge—as we have the urban centres that keep growing and growing—to have that sense of community.

I don't have to remind everybody here that in the last election, people overwhelmingly in Ontario felt that we were taking the wrong direction and entrusted a new government to take us in the right direction. That's exactly what we're doing. I have to say that I hear from many residents in Thornhill a lot of words of support on almost

everything we're working on. People really appreciate that we got out of the gate and we got to work really quickly. Obviously, everybody has a difference of opinion every now and then, but there's overwhelming support for the vast, vast majority of what we've been working on here and what we've been discussing here.

I think that when I say to all the new members who have joined me in the Legislature that I think that they're realizing just how interested their residents and their constituents are in following what they're doing—it's so easy now with social media, email newsletters and things like that—I think that we sometimes probably sit and think, "How did people manage when they were politicians 30 years ago? How did they communicate with people?" It must have been so frustrating for them. They didn't have telephone town halls that we can do—these digital huge events where people don't even have to leave their home or office.

We know that math is a big concern. I was an optometrist; I mention it often when I'm speaking here in the Legislature. My father was a meteorologist, which was a master's of engineering at that time, and my mother was a chartered accountant, which was almost unheard of for a woman in the 1950s. She was the only one to graduate that year. I think I've said it here before: She had her picture in the newspaper because it was such a big deal in the 1950s. So, obviously, there's a lot of math background in my family, and I had a lot of support at home. I was very lucky. I had great math teachers. I had great teachers in general.

If I can say that something was lacking in my education that would have been nice, it was to learn Latin. My parents learned Latin when they were in school. A lot of times when I would be struggling with my spelling—I'm a terrible speller, Madam Speaker. I'm so lucky with technology and spell-check and all that. It's a little bit challenging sometimes when you have all the technology and you don't have to remember things like phone numbers anymore. But a lot of times with spelling, I would say to my mother, "How did you know how to spell that?" It was such a complicated word, and who would have thought that it had to have a C and a Q put together? She would quote the Latin root word. That's how she always held onto that really solid education.

I know that our students want to learn French. Since I was born in Montreal, je parle français et je veux commencer un petit peu ici en français.

Our students: We want them to learn French, if they're able. We want to encourage that in Ontario.

If I can test how much coffee our translators had today, I just want to switch to a little French. I know that's a little challenging sometimes for people.

It's the projet de loi, dont on parle ici aujourd'hui, pour des écoles sûres et axées sur le soutien. Aussi, je veux dire merci à la ministre Thompson, qui a travaillé très, très fort sur toutes les nouvelles réglementations sur cette loi dont on discute aujourd'hui. On veut commencer tout de suite à travailler parce qu'on sait qu'on a fait des séances de discussions téléphoniques, un formulaire de soumission ouvert et un sondage en ligne avec 72 000 personnes.

C'était des élèves, des parents, des enseignants, des administrateurs de conseils scolaires, de syndicats, d'organismes communautaires et plus, madame la Présidente, qui ont parlé et discuté des nouvelles réglementations pour aider nos administrateurs dans les écoles et nos enseignants.

Je veux dire un peu en français qu'il nous manque des enseignants qui peuvent parler en français, qui sont un peu bilingues—même des francophiles—qui peuvent parler avec nos étudiants qui veulent améliorer leur français ou apprendre le français. Ça c'est un très grand problème. On sait qu'on a un nombre d'enseignants qui trouvent ça difficile, toutes les nouvelles « mathématiques de découverte » qu'on fait maintenant dans nos écoles. Alors, on devrait améliorer—c'est pour la santé et pour garder nos enfants dans une école sécuritaire avec des enseignants qui sont préparés et pour nous donner des employés, dont on a besoin, pour continuer d'être une des meilleures provinces dans un des meilleurs pays au monde. On sait qu'on peut le faire et qu'on peut se tourner vers une meilleure route pour assurer qu'on puisse garder nos enfants préparés pour les écoles secondaires, l'université, les collèges et aussi pour travailler—même dans l'industrie de la construction, qui cherche tout le temps des employés aussi.

One of the things that came to me yesterday, I'll just say very quickly, is a video and an article about dance classes. The parents are very concerned about some of the costumes and some of the dance moves that are being done. It reminded me of coaches. We have coaches outside of school settings and we have coaches inside school settings, and there's a lot of concern about coaches being better trained in Ontario. I think the ideal situation is when teachers are involved and parents are involved, because we all know that when adults work with children and they have too much access to children on their own, it's a bit of a recipe for disaster.

We have to ensure that our students understand consent, understand their safety and understand that their coach is there to guide them, to help them and to teach them a sport, to help them to develop into future adults who are stable and don't have any health care problems because of a teacher they had or a coach they had. I think that most of us here understand that.

I look forward to hearing the debate, but most importantly, I look forward to seeing Bill 48 passed and seeing us getting on the road to having a better community, strong schools in our communities and more family involvement—if I can appeal to people to get involved in your children's schools.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm pleased to speak to the time allocation motion before this House.

I want to start by just pointing out that the government talks now about there being this urgent need to move to committee very quickly, to only have a few hours of time in committee for discussion of this bill. This bill was introduced in October of last year. It was quite surprising to me, given the apparent urgency of this legislation to this gov-

ernment, that it wasn't a priority enough for this government, in the fall, to get to second reading before the break. We could have used that time before the House came back to have some real, deep conversations about some very important issues.

This government continues to point out that these are very important issues being addressed in this legislation—and this sense of sudden urgency, which is being used to argue that we can only have a limited amount of debate and discussion on this very important bill—yet they had months and months and months to bring this through this House. It was quite astonishing. I actually have to admit: I wondered whether or not maybe the government had found something in the bill that they thought needed to be addressed before, and maybe they needed to make some changes, because it was clearly not a bill that has been given a lot of thought. There are a lot of issues in this legislation.

0920

We were pleased to support the bill in second reading because we want it to have that kind of deep consideration because we know that some of the issues that this bill is trying to address are important issues. But unfortunately the legislation is weak. It is just very weak, and that is what we are hearing from stakeholders. We know that it needs careful consideration and debate and discussion, and I know that this government wants to create good legislation. I believe that's what we're all here to do. We want to create good laws, laws that really work, Madam Speaker, for our communities, and in this case for our children, for our young people, for our education system.

It was very concerning to me that this bill came back very suddenly again, and then that this government would choose to time-allocate this bill so that we have very limited discussion. I also want to point out, Madam Speaker, that because this bill was rushed through this week and because this government for some reason seems to really desperately want to get over the debate at committee very, very quickly, there will be no opportunity now for those committee hearings to be advertised in papers, for example.

What's going to happen, and just for those who may be watching this, is that at about 1 o'clock, presumably—around 1 o'clock, let's say, if this time allocation motion has passed—there will be something electronically posted on the website letting people know that they have until 5 p.m. today to register to come and speak to this bill. That is not consultation. I just listened to the member from Thornhill talk about the need for consultation, and I'm astonished. Also, I want to just point out that the government's so-called town halls or consultations or all these surveys that the government claims they're seeking so much input from the public on—well, that wasn't wrapped up by October 25. These issues weren't even on the table for discussion. So I don't know what they're talking about in terms of consultation having taken place. There was no consultation on this, and this bill deserves that. It's important legislation.

If you want it to work, then that means taking the time, albeit—absolutely, if we could have gone through the

committee hearings over the holidays or in the fall after this was introduced—I don't know why the government thought it was okay to delay it for months and months and months. Don't lay this on the opposition, I would say. Don't lay this on us.

People out there will not have had a chance to hear about this legislation. They might have real concerns.

I'm going to give you an example. We talked about service dogs—great issue; a very interesting issue; a very important issue: service animals being allowed into schools. I wouldn't say that this legislation opens that door necessarily, but it allows for the conversation to happen. There are advocates on that issue who have been working on this issue for years who were shocked when this legislation was introduced. They had not heard it was coming and they are unhappy with the way that it's framed in this legislation. These are people who actually support that.

So you're getting something wrong. The members opposite—the government—is getting something wrong, and they don't seem interested in fixing it, which is what I find really hard to understand as someone, like all of us here, who was elected presumably to make good government, to create good laws. We don't want laws that are weak. We don't want laws that don't hold up. If you're serious about this, give it some legs. Get us in the room and let's talk to the people who really have a lot of knowledge to impart.

I also just want to note that when you rush this kind of thing, you make mistakes, and we've all seen that. We've all seen that, in legislation introduced under the previous government, and the government before that. If you rush through legislation like this, you're going to make mistakes and it's not going to be good for anyone, because we are talking about our children; we're talking about protections for our children; we're talking about building a stronger public education system. If that's what you're concerned about, I cannot understand why you would want to rush this part of the conversation through, especially the part that involves careful consideration of input from members of the public—the people that this government likes to talk about so often.

The government ragged the puck here and delayed the debate, actually, for months—months. They pushed it off well into the new year. Here we are in February, and now suddenly it's urgent again.

What is this legislation really all about? It's not about the people, because if it was, we would be going out there and we would be seeking the input of people across this province—not just here in Toronto, by the way. Why don't we go a little further north, just for example, or a little further west or a little further east? But no, apparently this government is really only interested in hearing from people in Toronto. Okay, fair enough; I'm a Davenport MPP. I represent the wonderful riding of Davenport in beautiful downtown west-end Toronto. I think we should be hearing from folks in Thunder Bay. I think we should be hearing—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mushkegowuk.

Ms. Marit Stiles: There we go. Why not? Why can't we hear from those folks? What is it about them that they

don't matter as much to this government, that their opinion doesn't matter as much?

We know, as I mentioned earlier, that there are advocates out there, including the service animal advocates, who have not been consulted on this issue. We've spoken to them. They have not been consulted. They were not consulted when this legislation was developed. It came out of nowhere. There is not going to be much opportunity for their input now. We do not see any of the changes that they have recommended reflected here.

I want to also talk about the College of Teachers review, because that's also in this legislation. What there is is the opening up of the possibility to make changes to the College of Teachers. This is really important because—not everyone will know this, necessarily—the College of Teachers has been under a very significant governance review. This raises lots of important questions, especially for teachers, since it is the College of Teachers. The College of Teachers review had not even been received by the College of Teachers when this legislation was introduced, so it has been introduced in a vacuum.

Even more interesting, the government has since received that review very recently. They've received the report from the committee that was reviewing this. The College of Teachers' board itself will not be meeting until February 28 to look at that review recommendation, just to even consider it. So, this is extraordinarily premature. I can tell you, the College of Teachers is concerned. I think they're going to come next week and probably share these concerns. If they don't, I will make sure that I ask them about it.

There are going to be concerns there that this legislation, again, is premature. If you were to have listened to what they had to say or paid any attention—if the government was to pay any attention to the timelines of this review—then you would know that this wasn't going to be discussed until February 28 by the college, and that they won't come forward with recommendations to the government until after that, in which case, why wouldn't you want to see what they have to say before you design legislation to address their concerns that you haven't heard? It is really quite bizarre, Madam Speaker. I think it speaks again to these questions around why suddenly this is so urgent.

I wonder sometimes, when things come up like this, and they try to pass things through really quickly, if it has a little bit more to do with what else is going on out there. What else is happening out there right now that you might want to—oh, I don't know—change the channel on, maybe change the channel a little bit? Like, for example—oh, I don't know—devastating cuts and changes to the Ontario Autism Program? Could that have anything to do with it, do you think? I wonder. Because it really does seem like there is something else behind this, some urgency suddenly, which didn't exist until this week.

So, there are many, many unanswered questions in this legislation. It is very weak. It is very weak legislation, and I say that coming from a place where I think some of what it's trying to achieve is important. We need to make it good and work, but it is shockingly weak. We think it needs work.

It's unfortunate again, because it purports to address some issues that are very, very serious and I really think

deserve the best response possible, the best solutions that we can come up with, the finest thinking and the most attention, the greatest and the broadest consideration, and the greatest consultation, hearing from the parents, certainly, but also hearing from the folks who are the experts in these areas, which is important, because we're talking about our children and our children's education.

I am not an education expert. I am an MPP. I'm a parent. I'm not an education expert. I'm not an expert on math tests for teachers. This is not my forte. I didn't go to school to learn about that, but I know people who have, and I'd like to talk to them. I'd like to hear from them before this government imposes something that is not going to achieve anything and could even make things worse.

0930

Part of the problem with this legislation is, it's a muddle of issues. It's coupling protecting children from predators—I think there's no one here who would ever disagree that that should be a priority—with things like setting up math tests for teachers. This is an omnibus bill on education, and it's throwing a whole lot of things together that are really unrelated. That is also very unfortunate. I think the government's intention here—I'm just going to speculate—may have been that you throw something like a math test in, which you think is going to be such a hit with parents, to distract from some other stuff that's going on in there, or make it difficult, for example, for teachers to say, "We've got a problem with this legislation, because you've thrown in this stuff about the math test and the College of Teachers issues, but you've also got all of this language to protect children from sexual predators, and we don't want to seem like we're opposing that." You've made it a little difficult for them, and the government knows they did that. That was intentional. The government has a majority, and they can do what they want here, apparently, but the problem with it is, it doesn't allow us to separate those issues and give them the consideration that they're due. They each deserve careful consideration. That is a disservice to the people this government purports to represent—who are, by the way, all the people. This government was not elected just to represent their people or the people, as the member from Thornhill mentioned, who home-school their children or the people who oppose the sexual education curriculum or the big CEOs who are getting lots of tax cuts. No. They were actually elected to represent all the people, as we all were.

I just want to mention, on this issue of the math tests—I want to go back to that for a minute, because, again, we're interested in having this conversation. We want to understand what the government wants to achieve here. It has been very unclear what the government is hoping to achieve here. It's a very bizarre concept, actually, suddenly putting in place a math test—not anything else, just that. Who's going to decide who designs that math test? What's in it? There are so many questions that everybody has.

When I went with some of my colleagues to be briefed on this legislation after it was introduced—which, again, was back in October—we met with the Deputy Minister of Education and a number of ADMs. It was quite an impressive crowd. I asked: "Can you explain to me where math tests for teachers have been used, if by other jurisdictions?

Can you show us where there has been success? Is there any information about that? We're trying to understand how this works and what the government is basing it on. Clearly, this is an idea that couldn't have possibly come out of thin air. It has to come from somewhere." Surprisingly, these civil servants who have worked their whole lives in education had not the foggiest clue. They couldn't tell us anything. They couldn't point to any evidence in any jurisdiction anywhere that this has been introduced or that this has worked or improved—and this is the really important part. Ultimately, what we're trying to do, I assume, is not cause anxiety for teachers or for teaching students. What we're trying to do is, presumably, to improve the math performance of our students. So wouldn't you want to see what works? Wouldn't you be interested in that? Yet somehow that never seems to have entered the equation, and I know this because I'm talking to the highest level of civil servants in this government.

Again, I'll go back to this issue of good legislation. If you want to talk about good legislation, you need to make sure those folks are on board and that they understand that they're working hard to make it work for the students, not for political purposes.

So that was really shocking to me, I have to say. I was kind of disturbed that we had gotten to this point where legislation had actually been introduced and clearly there was no—based on thin air, on nothing.

The minister and the civil servants can't answer how this is going to be administered. They can't tell us who will establish this test, who is going to write it, develop it, what it's based on, or how it's going to be assessed—which is very important. There are so many unanswered questions.

I think, when you look at the state of our schools in this province, you have to wonder how it is that when you're looking at improving the state of our children's education and how well they learn, you wouldn't be thinking about—oh, I don't know—for example, the fact that they have to go to school wearing hats and mitts in winter because it's so cold in their classrooms because there's a \$16-billion capital repair backlog that many, many members of this government signed a pledge to fix, including the Minister of Education. Have we heard one peep? No. In fact, those funds have been frozen.

Interjection.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Ironically, frozen.

So you have kids sweltering in the spring and the fall. You have kids freezing in the winter. You have kids already in classes that are too large with not enough supports, for example, for students with special needs, which I'm going to get back to in a few minutes. And then you're expecting them to focus on math or, frankly, anything. I think the fact that that hasn't been addressed by this government—the actual state of repair of our schools and the learning environment in which our children find themselves every day; and our teachers too, by the way—why isn't that being addressed? Why isn't that a priority? Why aren't you rushing that through?

I want to just take one moment to talk a little bit about something else that the member from Thornhill said. She talked about, again, "We've done so much consultation,"

and the role of parents. I know that parent choice is a big deal for this government. You know? I'm a parent. I like to have some choice. I like to have some say in how my kids—they're teenagers, so I have very little choice right now, sadly.

Just to put all this in some context here: The government didn't consult with anybody before they hauled modern sex education out of our classrooms. Not one person. There was no consultation under way before they rolled that back. They rolled it back—and this is the problem. They rolled it back and then they said, "Oh, now we're going to consult." Do you know what? No.

The member from Thornhill just mentioned the importance of learning consent, which I thought was an excellent point, especially as we see, increasingly, these issues emerge around people in positions of responsibility. This legislation is trying to address sexual predators in our schools and be tougher about that. Well, that is very important. This is an issue close to my heart, I can tell you, as I'm sure it is for many of us.

You say that, and then you're talking about the importance of having consent, therefore, in the schools discussed so that we can teach our kids this. And yes, parents need to talk about those things too; absolutely. But not every parent is going to do that, I'm sorry to say. It's true; not every parent is going to do that. And a lot of parents, frankly—people get busy. It's like, "Oh, do I not have to have that conversation with my kid? Great, because that's awkward." I think this does happen. Let's be realistic.

Not only did they take consent out of the curriculum—consent is not being taught right now; those kids are not learning consent. Not only did they take consent out, but in making that really rash decision—this goes back to this time allocation motion, rushing things through—guess what else you left out? Concussion education. Concussion education is no longer being taught in our schools. Why? Because this government pulled the sex ed curriculum out—the health and physical curriculum. Let's be clear; it's not just about sex ed. They pulled the whole thing out without talking with anybody about it. You can tell me, "Oh, well, our consultation was the election." Oh, come on.

I'm going to wrap up by saying that I think this government is making a big mistake here. You're going to pass legislation, with all due respect, Madam Speaker, that is going to be faulty and flawed. It's not going to be the tough legislation we all want. I have to say, I really hope the government reconsiders this time allocation motion.

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

Mr. Smith, Bay of Quinte, has moved government notice of motion number 30 relating to allocation of time on Bill 48, An Act to amend various Acts in relation to education and child care. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

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

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Vote deferred.

NOTICE OF REASONED AMENDMENT

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 71(c), the member for Timmins has filed with the Clerk a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 68, An Act with respect to community safety and policing. The order for second reading of Bill 68 may therefore not be called today.

Orders of the day? I recognize the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you, Speaker. No further business.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Tories don't want to work.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order, please. Order. The member for Timmins will come to order.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 0941 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

M. Gilles Bisson: Bonjour, monsieur le Président. J'aimerais reconnaître qu'avec nous aujourd'hui est le Parlement des jeunes, des élèves du secondaire d'à travers la province de l'Ontario. J'aimerais qu'on les applaudisse et qu'on leur dise bonjour et bienvenue à notre Assemblée.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to welcome Josh Underwood from my riding of Oxford to the Legislature today. He is here because he helped organize a group of young leaders who are here today to learn about Ontario politics. Welcome to Queen's Park, Josh.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I want to welcome Eleanor Jones Hannon, a family member of one of my staff, all the way from Halifax, Nova Scotia. Welcome, Eleanor.

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: J'aimerais souligner la présence aujourd'hui de personnes très spéciales de mon comté de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell qui sont ici pour le Parlement jeunesse. C'est Olivier Laurendeau, Alexis Martin-Daigneault, Joshua Diamanditiz, Clovis Girard, Kenny Jacques, Joshua Lalonde, Jean-Michel Tweed et Cassandra Simard. Bienvenue.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Good morning, Speaker. I'd like to welcome Dr. Doris Grinspun and the members of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario who are visiting Queen's Park today. Welcome, and we hope you enjoy your day.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It is my pleasure to welcome Betty Oldershaw, RNAO region 1 board of directors representative for RNAO members in southwestern Ontario, and Crystal Hepburn, RNAO Windsor-Essex chapter president. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Il me fait plaisir d'accueillir, moi aussi, des jeunes parlementaires du Parlement jeunesse 2019. Je suis fière d'accueillir, de la plus belle circonscription de l'Ontario, Orléans, José Barragán, Credo-Lys Iriho, Sacha Kayijuka, Jemima Kekumba et Lydia Philippe. Et aussi, we were very happy

this morning to share a good breakfast and a very good conversation with our friend from RNAO, someone who is on the board of directors, Linda Vu, who is here today. Welcome. Bienvenue à vous tous ici à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my honour today to introduce four incredible ladies from the great riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington: Betty Oldershaw, region 1 member of the board of directors; Sula Fong, a student at St. Clair College, Thames campus in Chatham; Kate—believe me, Kate, I'm going to get it right—Kate Shchepanouskaya. There you go. How's that? She is a nurse at CKHA. And Anita Purdy: Not only is she a supervisor at CKHA, but she is a nursing professor at St. Clair College. Welcome.

M. Guy Bourgouin: Moi aussi, je voudrais souhaiter la bienvenue aux jeunes parlementaires francophones, mais en particulier, deux étudiants de ma circonscription : Miguel Dillon de Hearst et aussi Marc-André Dumais de Kapuskasing. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to welcome to Queen's Park the family of the Whitby page, Shumyle Shahid. I have Maleeha Shahid, I have Shahid Chaudry and I have Ayaan Shahid. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Good morning. Meegwetch. I'd like to welcome Paddy Dasno, Carol Wood and Carol Maxwell from Sioux Lookout, as part of the RNA delegation.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It is my absolute pleasure to welcome the RNAO team that is here today and for all of the great work, Doris, that you and your team do on behalf of patients in Ontario. I had a great breakfast this morning with Lhamo Dolkar, Sonia Chin, So-Yan Seto, Alicia Moonesar, Erin Kohlmetz and Selvi Krishnadasan, who is actually from Scarborough-Guildwood. I want to say thank you to all of the east Toronto and Scarborough nurses who are here today, and welcome.

Mr. Doug Downey: I'd like to introduce Jonathan Sher, Erika Fifield, Cherie Durksen and Amanda Fountain with the RNAO. We had a great breakfast as well. Welcome.

Mr. Jamie West: I'd like to welcome the members from Sudbury from RNAO and the members from Sudbury from the young francophone parliamentarians. Also, I'd like to welcome Braelyn Guppy, who is our OLIP intern, who is doing an amazing job in our office.

M^{me} Gila Martow: Je veux donner un accueil au Parlement jeunesse francophone de l'Ontario aussi. Merci d'avoir chanté « Notre Place » hier soir ici à la législature.

Also, I want to welcome Doris Grinspun. We had a nice conversation in Hebrew at the RNAO table 11 for Thornhill. I want to welcome all of those RNs as well: Alex Sakhnovich, who was my high school co-op intern. Everybody watching at home: Apply. You get two credits and join us in our constituency offices or down here at Queen's Park.

Ms. Doly Begum: I would also like to welcome Barbara Chyzy; Lhamo Dolkar, board of directors from region 7; Isolde Daiski, Selvi Krishnadasan, and Sonia Chin from region 7 of the RNAO. Thank you so much for

all of your hard work and dedication. I had a great discussion this morning about the work you're doing in long-term care, so thank you so much.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I'm pleased to welcome Wil Husnutdinov to the Legislature today. Wil is here with a group of high school students to learn about Ontario politics. Please join me to welcome this young leader from my riding of Richmond Hill.

I would also like to welcome my good friend Mr. Tim Schindel, who has come all the way from BC. Welcome.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning. It gives me great pleasure to welcome into the Legislature nurse practitioner Natalie Fawcett, who is also a very good friend of mine and a nurse practitioner in Toronto Public Health; as well as my constituent, another RNAO member, Laura McBreairey. Thank you so much for being here today and sharing your issues with us.

M^{me} Nathalie Des Rosiers: J'aimerais, moi aussi, accueillir à Queen's Park Ali Al Moussawi de l'école l'Alternative et du beau comté d'Ottawa-Vanier. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I want to welcome two young leaders from York region and Niagara region who are with us today: my friends Alex Giordano and Jack Fazzari, who are making a great difference in their communities. Welcome to the people's House.

1040

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to welcome Sharon Talaskavic Richard and Chelsie Gibouleau, who provided me with some great information from RNAO this morning. Both of them are from the great riding of Algoma-Manitoulin.

Et puis, M^{me} Désirée Eisner, originaire de Chapleau, et puis, Dany Raymond, l'extrême, du Parlement jeunesse, de la FESFO: bienvenue à Queen's Park.

Ms. Jane McKenna: I just want to say that this morning I had a wonderful conversation with Opal Robinson, who is sitting right ahead of me. I was absolutely amazed at all the things that she has done as a nurse in her time. It was very, very impressive, and the conversation was great. Thank you so much, Opal.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today the Niagara region and St. Catharines team from the RNAO. Thank you for coming for breakfast this morning and for the breakfast.

I'd also like to recognize Mahoganie Hines.

The member from Niagara Falls will be recognizing the others from Niagara region.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I would also like to welcome my colleagues from the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario: my mentor, Dr. Doris Grinspun; president Angela Cooper; and my friend Piroshka. I'm so proud that today is our annual lobby day and of all the work that they are doing on behalf of patients and nurses in Ontario.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to welcome RNAO members from Niagara: Holly Rogers and Nathan Kelly. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: With the RNAO from North Bay today, we have Catherine Ewers, Cathy Morris, Colleen Scanlan and student Brad Manuel.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I also would like to welcome all the members from RNAO today, but especially Kelly from London and Megan and Adrian Laan from Kingston. Thank you for coming today and giving us wonderful information about our health care system at the breakfast meeting in the dining room.

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: I would like to welcome Sara Casselman and Nicky Carswell from the Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region, also known as SASC. Sara is the executive director at SASC. She has worked in the anti-violence-against-women sector since 2002. Nicky is the coordinator of the anti-human-trafficking program, which represents a piece of the Ontario strategy to combat human trafficking.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to welcome two wonderful, caring nurses from London West who were here today as part of the RNAO breakfast: Farnaz Michalski and Janet Hunt.

I would also like to welcome two parents of children with autism who are here from London West: Brandi Tapp and Sarah Farrants.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I'd like to also welcome the members of the RNAO who came here from Niagara today: Nathan Kelly and of course Mahogonie and Holly, who I've met with many times in my office.

I also wish to welcome to the Legislature Jack Fazzari, who is a VP with Brock Campus Conservatives and is here today in the Legislature to watch question period.

Mr. Jeff Burch: I'd like to welcome a new legislative page from my riding, Cameron Harris, his mother, Lisa, and his grandmother Agnes, who are here in the gallery today.

M^{me} Mitzie Hunter: Au nom du caucus libéral, nous aimerions souhaiter la bienvenue à tous les jeunes parlementaires du Parlement jeunesse. Bonne session.

Hon. Laurie Scott: I would like to introduce, from the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, whom I met with this morning, from my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, Jill Staples.

I also met with Betsy Jackson and Angela Cooper Brathwaite and a nursing student, Lauren Allison.

It was great to hear your views, as a fellow nurse.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoché: I'd like to give a warm welcome to: Martha McGroarty, who is a mental health advocate; my constituents Beverly Swerling; John Mohler; Ann-Marie Mohler, who is a faith community nurse; Sergio Arangio; David Morales, who is a student from George Brown doing a placement in my office; Dechen Tenzin, who is my constituency assistant; Gillian Smith; Alvine Flor; Bri Gardner, who is a friend and youth activist from Etobicoke-Lakeshore; friends from the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario; and also my friend Ashley Davis.

Mr. David Piccini: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I would like to welcome to the Legislature this morning a young university student who helped me on my campaign, Minnie Chen.

In addition to a fantastic breakfast I had with the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, I have a local constituent, Kathleen Pikaart, here and Regina Elliott from Durham as well. I had a great breakfast with them this morning. Thank you for coming.

Ms. Suze Morrison: I'd like to welcome two constituents from my riding of Toronto Centre who are here with the RNAO today, Carolyn Edgar and Sarah Quinto. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to introduce RNAO members from both Sarnia-Lambton and Lambton-Kent-Middlesex here with us today: Kaitlyn Green, Marisa Hartford, Kristie Butler and Charlene McMahon. They're all here to join us on their lobby day. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the RNs from Hamilton. I had a very productive meeting with them this morning, and they brought forth a lot of important issues that I hope the government is going to deal with.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I believe that concludes the time we have available for introductions this morning. I appreciate the patience of the members. We have a lot of guests. We're delighted that they're here. I think that the introductions are the most pleasant part of the morning, so we've allowed them to continue way past the available time.

GREY CUP

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order: the leader of the official opposition.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I seek unanimous consent regarding the city of Hamilton's bid to host the 2020 Grey Cup championship.

Interjection: Go, Ti-Cats, go.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Oskee Wee Wee.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Sorry, I apologize. Could you please repeat your request?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I seek unanimous regarding the city of Hamilton's bid to host the 2020 Grey Cup championship. I move that the House endorses the city of Hamilton's bid to host the 2020 Grey Cup, the biggest game in Canadian football.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Leader of the Opposition is seeking unanimous consent of the House to move a motion to endorse—not to move a motion. It would be helpful if I had it in writing, I would say that. Seeking unanimous consent. Agreed? Agreed.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I seek unanimous consent to ask a question in place of the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Guelph is seeking unanimous consent of the House to ask a question in place of the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell: Agreed? Agreed.

Are we ready for question period?

Interjections.

ORAL QUESTIONS

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. Yesterday, parents from across Ontario came to implore the Ford government to help their families with treatments for children with autism, treatments that can cost as much as \$80,000 a year. They are at their wits' end, unsure of how to cope with the government's changes.

Last night on CTV News, the minister responded by suggesting that they could use the woefully inadequate government support to buy an iPad. Is that the Ford government's idea of a treatment plan, Speaker: an iPad?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Our plan is built on choice, and if parents think that a technological aid will help advance their child, then I want to support them in doing that.

Let me read from some of the parents who have written to us about this program. Monica, a mom of an autistic teen, appreciates the new plan offers services to a range of children. "My son was always deemed too high-functioning to receive funding, but he needed OT. I ended up taking OT classes at the University of Toronto Scarborough and doing it myself." All of this plan will help her son.

I understand that there are a lot of parents who are concerned about this plan, but there are a lot of parents who are going to be relieved with this plan, because 23,000 children were languishing on a wait-list, and my obligation is to support all children, not just 25% of them.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: After the Premier promised families so much, this Premier has done nothing to offer anything to parents. The promises were big, but the result was nil. All they've done is given the families of this province who have children with autism the expectation to have no hope. That's what they said yesterday: Give up hope. There's no hope left for you. In fact, that's literally what the minister said: "No parent should have any hope." Meanwhile, parents who joined us yesterday are planning to sell their homes, cash in life savings, just to provide the supports that the Ford government has yanked from them.

1050

When her party needed those parents' votes, the minister was happy to offer hope, Speaker. But now that she has the minister's office, she has nothing to offer at all. How can she justify that?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate that the leader of the official opposition wants to play politics and score political points off the backs of vulnerable families.

There are 23,000 children in this province who have gone without support. We have increased funding in this ministry. The budget used to be \$256 million; I have increased it—during a time when the previous Liberal government left us with a \$15-billion deficit—to \$321 million. During that period of time, Speaker, I made a commitment to the parents who were currently receiving service that we would continue their funding throughout Christmas and

had to go to Treasury Board for an emergency \$102 million so that the 25% of the children who were receiving support could continue to receive support.

But if the member opposite is suggesting that I should do what the previous Liberal government did and ignore 75%—three out of four—of the children in the province of Ontario with autism, think again.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, what I wouldn't expect from a minister of the crown is to tell parents to just forget about having any hope for the future for the services and treatments their kids need. That's what I would not expect from a minister of the crown.

Parents from across Ontario feel they've been betrayed by this Ford government. Yesterday, the Premier removed the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston from the government caucus for insulting parents with rude and dismissive comments. Frankly, Randy Hillier's insulting comments didn't hurt families as much as the minister's heartless scheme. His comments weren't nearly as offensive as a minister who threatens autism advocates when they refuse to endorse her changes.

Does the minister agree with the Premier's decision to suspend the member from caucus, and if so, why doesn't she think she should also be resigning from cabinet?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before I ask the minister to respond, I'll remind the House that we refer to members by their riding names or by their ministerial title, depending on the situation.

Minister, respond.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much, Speaker. Thanks again to the member opposite for her question. I remain resolute in the fact that three out of four children in this province have been denied service from their Ontario government, which is why I went to the treasury and asked for an increase in funding during a very difficult time in this province's financial history.

We have now increased the budget to \$321 million. We are doubling our investment in diagnostic hubs so we can get quicker diagnoses for children at a much earlier age. We believe in early intervention, which is why we are going to front-end a lot of money for children between the ages of zero and five, where we know support will help them the best it possibly can. We're going to a direct-funding model so that parents can be enabled and empowered to choose the best services for their children.

Speaker, when I hear the member opposite trying to play politics with these families in a very difficult and emotional file, I am very disappointed with them, but I remain resolute and I remain committed to implementing this government's plan.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. The parents who joined us here yesterday and today aren't demanding the impossible, Speaker. They simply want the support that their children were promised by the Premier.

With therapy and treatment, children who seem to be in their own worlds are able to communicate. They're able to feed themselves. They're able to tell their own parents that they love them. No parent should have to choose between selling their home and denying that to their children. But the minister is not only doing that; she's telling parents that they should be happy. Does she think that's acceptable, Speaker?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Let me tell you a little bit about Sarah, who wrote in to Autistics 4 Autistics. She said, "What the province had available under the old OAP wouldn't be useful for my daughter. I paid out of pocket for everything." She's anxious to see what the new program will offer. Why? Because we're empowering parents with choice. Whether that is with behavioural support, whether that is with technological aids, whether that is with caregiver training or respite support, we are offering choice.

But more importantly than anything, we are looking at the 23,000 children who are languishing on a wait-list with endless no hope in sight or support for them. We are going to lift them up and provide them with support by investing in diagnostic hubs, doubling that investment, ensuring that we have more support for northern Ontario, and ensuring that they have a direct fund so they can choose what works best for their child. I won't apologize for that.

Interjections.

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

Start the clock. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it doesn't empower people when you take away their choices, and that's what this government is doing. The choice they're leaving these families with is to sell their home to provide treatment. The choice they're leaving these families with is to cash in their RRSPs to provide treatment for their kids. The only people who have choice are the wealthy, who can afford to provide the services for their children. We don't ask them to provide cancer services for their kids, do we, Speaker? No. And we shouldn't ask them to provide autism treatments for their kids either.

She seems to be more interested in the support that families can provide her than supporting them. Whether it's threatening a group of behaviour analysts with "four long years" if they don't publicly support a new funding system, or claiming to have the support of organizations from which they don't have support, the minister has made it clear where her priorities lie.

Why is she more interested in delivering positive headlines for herself and her government than delivering results for children with autism and the family members who love them?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I get she's angry; the whole place here gets that she's angry.

But I'll tell you something that angered me was the fact that three out of four children in Ontario were denied support by their Ontario government. That's what angered

me. That's why I'm acting. It's those 23,000 children who are languishing on a wait-list, who are being ignored by the New Democrats, who were ignored by the Liberals. They are my focus. I'm clearing the wait-list—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: If you can't do the job, get out of the way.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Essex, come to order.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: —increasing diagnostic hub support. We're going to directly fund parents so that they have more choice for their child.

Let me be perfectly clear, and I say this to the member opposite: If you think it's fine to ignore 75% of the children in this province who have autism, that's your prerogative, but this government will stand—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. I'll remind all members once again, this is the provincial Parliament of Ontario. You make your comments through the Chair, even in question period, at all times.

Start the clock. Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it looks like the minister mistook my disgust for something else.

Parents are desperate for the treatment and therapy that their children need to thrive. That was clear yesterday; that's been clear for years and years and years. The sad thing is this minister knows it. Treatment and therapy that the vast majority of them couldn't dream of paying for themselves—and she knows that as well, Speaker. Treatment and therapy that they are selling their homes and remortgaging and going deeply into debt in order to provide—and she knows that too.

Instead of offering help, however, the Ford government tells parents that there is no point in having any hope.

Yesterday, an MPP was booted from the government caucus for insulting parents, but my question to the minister is this: Isn't it more insulting to tell these parents that they should give up hope and settle in for four long years?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I understand she wants to portray a certain narrative, Speaker. The problem is, however, when I saw the wait-list of 23,000 children, there was no end in sight.

We increased the budget for this program from \$256 million to \$321 million. We are doubling our investment in diagnostic hubs at CHEO, Erinoak, Holland Bloorview and other places including in the north. We are going to enable and empower families to have a childhood budget where they will work with Autism Ontario, which we signed a \$700,000 contract with to help navigate the system so moms and dads can best utilize that support.

We're going to provide choice. Parents say that sometimes ABA doesn't work for their child but they would like a technological aid such as those I've seen across the province as I toured children's treatment centres.

Speaker, please understand this: This is a very important priority for this government. That's why this plan will be implemented and that's why we'll clear the wait-list in 18 months.

1100

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Minister of Health—but I do have to say that this is not about a narrative; it's about children with autism. Look in the mirror over there, Minister. Look in the mirror.

Patients across Ontario are worried about the Ford government's plans to create a mega-agency with a mandate to privatize in our health care system. Can the minister tell us what front-line health staff she's consulted as she's developed this plan, or is she still denying that the plan exists?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I can absolutely tell the Leader of the Opposition that we are not looking at privatization. What we are looking at is strengthening our public health care system.

You know and I know that there are concerns, there are gaps, there are problems in our public health care system as people are transitioning from hospital to home care or to long-term care. First of all, we know there aren't enough long-term-care spots. There are 30,000 people in Ontario waiting for a long-term-care spot. We have 1,200 people every day in hospitals across Ontario who are receiving care in hallways and in storage rooms in hospitals, and we know that there are thousands of people waiting for mental health and addictions treatment.

What we are looking at is a transformative plan, but it is to strengthen our public health care system, where people will continue to use their OHIP cards to pay for their services.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Of course, today we are joined in the Legislature by registered nurses from across Ontario. Many of the members in the chamber introduced them this morning and we're very pleased to have them here.

These nurses provide the sort of care that makes a real difference for patients. Their focus today is not on creating a new health mega-agency or more for-profit care in our health care system; it's investing in primary care and calling on government to fill the 10,000 nursing vacancies in Ontario hospitals.

The Ford government has found money to pay Rueben Devlin to help sell privatization plans. When will they listen to nurses and start investing in front-line staff for our hospitals? We need them desperately if we're going to tackle hallway medicine.

Hon. Christine Elliott: As I indicated to the leader of the official opposition, we are intending to strengthen our public health care system. We are continuing our consultations with health service providers and with patients and families. Those consultations started the day that I was declared and sworn in as Minister of Health and those conversations continue to this day.

I have also had the opportunity to tour a number of our hospitals and speak with the health care professionals who are providing care on the front lines. They don't want to be taking care of patients in hallways. That's not what they were trained to do. It's putting incredible stress on them as well as on the patients and families who are receiving care.

We want to end hallway medicine. We want to make sure that we can get people timelier access to treatment

and we want to make sure that people continue to feel connected to their health care system throughout their lives. That is what we're working on and that is what we're going to deliver to the people of Ontario.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. Last month, I hosted a community awareness night about human trafficking in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington. Despite the subject matter being heavy, the event was a success, with over 600 in attendance. My motive was to keep my community safe from these predators, as I'm sure it is for all of us here in the Legislature.

Attendees were shocked to hear from local police, social workers and survivor support networks about how deep the crisis of human trafficking runs in Ontario and how young women and girls of all backgrounds, some as young as 12, are being forced into sex work.

Given that tomorrow is Human Trafficking Awareness Day, can the minister explain how our government plans to bring awareness to this issue?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I really appreciate the dedication the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington has put into this issue and I was very impressed that he had 600 people attend his public meeting. I'm looking forward to going back into his community to continue to support the work that he's doing.

Obviously, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the great work that the labour minister, Laurie Scott, did in opposition to ensure that we have this day enshrined in Ontario's Legislature. There have been a number of other members in this assembly who have been doing some great work.

Let me start with what we're going to do. We made a historic investment into violence against women prevention just before Christmas, \$174 million that we are investing not only to support violence against women prevention, but also to eradicate sex trafficking in our communities. I held a round table with the member from Renfrew, who is our natural resources minister. I'm working with the federal government at a task table.

I'm very excited—and I'm going to be mentioning this more tomorrow—that today the member from Cambridge and member from Mississauga Centre will be embarking on round table discussions throughout the province in order to eradicate this.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary? The member for Cambridge.

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: I want to thank the minister for her response and for taking such a strong stance against sex trafficking, ensuring that our government works to educate Ontarians about this horrific practice. The sad reality is that this is a crime that impacts children. About a quarter of victims of sex trafficking are under the age of 18.

It even impacts our most vulnerable, including the homeless, who are targeted because they are particularly unguarded. Traffickers exploit their vulnerabilities and trap them in a cycle of abuse. Even when these girls

manage to escape, the effects are long-lasting. It's a crime that doesn't discriminate. It can happen in our biggest cities and our smallest towns.

Speaker, my question is twofold. First, what is the minister doing to ensure young girls across Ontario are safe? And second, what actions are being taken for those fleeing violence in rural areas?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: That's a very important question. I want to congratulate the member from Cambridge, who is my parliamentary assistant, as well as the member from Mississauga Centre, who will be embarking on round tables across the province, meeting with law enforcement but also with victims and survivors and those who are working in this space.

I'm really excited that, as we lead into human trafficking—or sex trafficking, as I call it, because it is Ontario's dirty little secret. We are looking at girls as young as 11 who have been trafficked and coerced and having their lives ruined, and we need to do more. That starts with awareness, which is what we're going to build on tomorrow from that important work that was done by Minister Scott over a year ago. We're going to continue to support those efforts, and I'll continue to work with the federal government so we can make sure that we have support across all jurisdictions.

In terms of our rural support, Speaker, thanks to the male members of this caucus from rural communities across Ontario who have seen violence against women, we have invested \$1.5 million just for rural initiatives for communities like hers across this province.

INDIGENOUS HEALTH CARE

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

My question is to the Deputy Premier. On January 16, Cat Lake First Nation declared a state of emergency due to black mould. Some 87 out of 128 homes are uninhabitable. I visited Cat Lake two weeks ago to see the state of the community for myself. What I saw was very shocking. I saw young children and babies covered in rashes and was told about elders with serious lung infections. One parent told me about his 12-year-old daughter, about a rash on her face and neck so bad that she wouldn't leave her bedroom. The mother was worried about her mental health.

Mr. Speaker, two days ago the community lost a mother, grandmother and wife. Nashie Oombash passed away in Thunder Bay, seeking treatment for pneumonia and breathing problems that her doctor said were likely caused by the mould in her home.

Let me remind you, everyone: Ontario is a signatory to Treaty 9, and as such has a legal obligation to all First Nation communities in the territory, including Cat Lake. I would like to know how the Deputy Premier plans to honour Ontario's treaty obligation to Cat Lake in relation to the mould crisis in the community.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Minister of Indigenous Affairs.

Hon. Greg Rickford: I think I speak on behalf of all my colleagues in the Progressive Conservative Party that we're deeply saddened to hear of the loss of Nashie Oombash from Cat Lake First Nation. We take the safety and well-

being of all our communities, in particular isolated and remote First Nations communities who are more vulnerable in certain circumstances, as a top priority.

I've had discussions with the chief and council. We're coordinating our efforts with respect to their declaration of an emergency response. We continue to help them find solutions for their housing crisis. We call on the federal government to live up to their responsibilities. I've been in that position before, where we've helped communities build new suburbs, build housing so that their folks can have safer, cleaner environments to live in.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Mr. Speaker, many of my colleagues have committed to visiting and helping Cat Lake, but this is not the same as living in these conditions, day to day, for an entire lifetime. The mould crisis in Cat Lake is now a public health emergency. Health in First Nations communities is the clear responsibility of the provincial government.

With urgency, will the Deputy Premier send a community health assessment team to Cat Lake First Nation immediately? A 12-year-old girl in the community of Cat Lake cannot wait.

Hon. Greg Rickford: I thank the member for his question. As I said earlier, we continue to work in a coordinated manner with all of our stakeholders and partners under the declaration of an emergency.

I've had a chance to live and work in Cat Lake over the course of a number of years. As I said before, our discussions with the chief and council were very productive. We shared our profound disappointment for the federal government's responsibility for housing, for ensuring that they have safe, affordable, clean housing. We will continue in our efforts to support Cat Lake First Nation.

POLICE SERVICES

SERVICES POLICIERS

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: My question today is for the Attorney General. We, on this side of the House, have a deep respect for the important work done by law enforcement professionals. We know that they are heroes keeping our communities safe. Yesterday, the Minister for Community Safety and Correctional Services introduced a very important piece of legislation: Bill 68, the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act.

Speaker, the Liberals also had a piece of policing legislation: Bill 175. It was, plain and simple, the most anti-police legislation in Canadian history. I know that our hard-working minister and the Attorney General listened to our men and women in uniform and worked tirelessly to get this bill right. Our police deserve nothing but respect for the work that they do.

Would the Attorney General please tell us what front-line officers are saying about this government's proposed changes?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I'd like to thank the member from Mississauga Centre for her question. Our legislation will, if passed, provide transparency and clarity to police officers, police chiefs and to the people of Ontario.

I'd like to let you know, Mr. Speaker, what Rob Jamieson, the president and CEO of the Ontario Provincial Police Association has said: "The work OPPA members do every day keeps the people of our province safe. Unfortunately, challenges in the current legislation make it more difficult for the police to do their jobs. The changes proposed by the government ... intend to empower police across Ontario to ensure community safety."

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to keeping our communities safe and to giving our front-line officers the tools that they need to do their jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

M^{me} Natalia Kusendova: Merci, madame la Ministre. Je suis heureuse d'entendre que notre gouvernement pour la population a écouté les préoccupations des agentes et agents de première ligne. Je pense que cette nouvelle législation est équilibrée, respectueuse et équitable. Monsieur le Président, je sais que les agents de première ligne dans ma communauté et à travers l'Ontario seront heureux de ces changements.

J'étais préoccupée hier en entendant ce qui a été dit au sujet des enquêtes dont les agents peuvent faire l'objet s'ils ne réussissent pas à arrêter une tentative de suicide ou s'ils tentent de leur mieux de sauver une vie en administrant les premiers soins. Je songe aux courageux agents qui ont répondu à la fusillade tragique sur Danforth.

De ce côté-ci de la Chambre, nous savons que nos agentes et nos agents sont hautement entraînés et risquent tout pour que nous puissions vivre en sécurité. Est-ce que la procureure générale pourrait expliquer comment les changements aux enquêtes de l'UES vont améliorer les conditions pour les agents?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Je voudrais être claire : notre gouvernement sait que les femmes et les hommes en uniforme sont des héros de tous les jours.

Pour fournir la transparence et la clarté à la population et à la police, la législation va clarifier le mandat de l'Unité des enquêtes spéciales. Si elle est adoptée, cela concentrera les ressources d'enquêtes là où on en a besoin, sur les activités criminelles, au sein d'un système de surveillance policière qui est transparent, équitable et efficace. La législation rendra finalement clair pour chacun les cas où il y a l'obligation d'aviser : tels les cas où l'utilisation de la force, la garde, la détention ou les poursuites en véhicules motorisés ont eu pour résultats des blessures graves ou un décès; ou lorsqu'une arme à feu a été déchargée en direction d'une personne; ou dans un cas rapporté d'agression sexuelle. Le projet de loi répond également à presque toutes les recommandations du juge Tulloch contenues dans son examen indépendant des organismes de surveillance de la police.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Last week, I attended a rally at the MCCSS office

in Windsor, alongside almost 100 parents and workers who are disgusted by the Conservative government's changes to the Ontario Autism Program. The new plan leaves all children with autism to make do with less. They will have access to less funding, which means fewer hours of vital therapy and treatment. It means children will not be able to reach their full potential. And when they turn 18, they will be cut off altogether and forced on a wait-list for adult support that is several years long.

Will the Deputy Premier show some leadership and change this disastrous autism plan?

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the member opposite bringing those concerns to the assembly. I know she has a private member's bill later on today about developmental disabilities, which we are pleased to offer our support for in government.

I also wanted to clear up a misconception she may have, because it appears that they're talking about wait-lists of several years and people aging out of programs. The real issue here is the 23,000 children who have been denied service by their Ontario government. Three out of four children in Ontario are on an endless wait-list with no light at the end of the tunnel. That is our motivation. That is why we are moving to a direct-funding model. That is why we are increasing funding in diagnostic hubs and encouraging more investment in northern Ontario.

We are going to continue to support this program. I think it's important that the members opposite understand that this is the plan that will be implemented.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: The real issue is that the minister thinks that their autism program is actually making it better for people in this province, and that she actually thinks that 14,000 to 16,000 adults with developmental disabilities sitting on a wait-list for four to five years for support is not a problem. That's the issue with this minister.

Back to the Deputy Premier: In 2016, autism families fought tooth and nail to get the Liberal government to recognize that autism doesn't end at five. Now these families are fighting like hell again because not only is this government forcing children with autism to go without necessary therapy; they are exclusively focused on Ontarians with autism under the age of 18. The Deputy Premier needs to understand that autism doesn't end at five; it doesn't end at 18, either. In fact, there are many developmental disabilities this government must recognize need additional supports: Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, fetal alcohol syndrome, and many, many more.

Would the Deputy Premier pass my private member's bill, Noah and Gregory's Law, ensure that it actually makes it through committee and back into the House, support it at third reading and demonstrate that adults with developmental disabilities actually deserve this government's support?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I guess she can't take yes for an answer. I said in the first question's response that, yes, the government will be supporting her private member's bill

this afternoon with respect to inclusion. I did send her a note earlier in question period to let her know that we would be supporting the legislation. Unfortunately, I have a speech that I have to give in Cobourg so I can't lend my support this afternoon, but you have it this morning, and you've had it in writing, so there's that.

Christine, a mom of an autistic 11-year-old child, said, "Under the OAP, we had to pay for his therapies because they weren't ABA. Why? These therapies were totally amazing for my son, but the OAP seemed to think there was only one way to learn how to brush your teeth. Maybe the new plan will allow families to choose what's best for them." I'm proud to stand here today, Speaker, and say, "Yes, that's what we're doing." We're also going to make sure that there are going to be more supports in our school system.

1120

I expect the member opposite to have a word with her member from Ottawa Centre, who basically said yesterday that we need to rethink the program because it will ruin our public school system. Does she believe that autistic children should be included in our school system? Yes or no?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Mr. Joel Harden: You're better than that.

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Shame.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: You should be ashamed.

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

Next question.

SEXUAL ASSAULT CRISIS CENTRES

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My question is for the Attorney General. Rape crisis centres provide essential services for women who need life-saving and life-affirming help right now. The need for these vital services is on the rise. Many centres operate at 1990 staffing levels, yet your ministry has frozen a promised funding increase that rape crisis centres desperately need right now.

Minister, when will you release this funding so front-line workers can deliver the services women in crisis need and deserve?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before I ask the minister to respond, I'll say once again: Please make your comments through the Chair.

The Attorney General.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for his question. Let me be clear: Our government has zero tolerance for sexual assault, for harassment and for any form of violence against women or against anyone in our communities. Our government stands with victims of crime, and all Ontarians deserve to live free from violence. That's why we're committed to providing victims with the services and the supports that they need.

My ministry, along with the Minister of Community and Social Services, is working hard to review the pro-

grams that our province offers and the funding commitments that the previous government made to make sure that we are supporting victims of crime in a way that meets their direct needs in their communities where they live, and to do so in a sustainable way.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Mr. Speaker, I think we all stand with women in crisis, but we can't stand behind a funding review and deny rape crisis centres the funding they need right now. The government was able to find money to give a tax cut to the 1%, but they're not able to find money to help women experiencing sexual violence who need help right now.

I know that rape crisis centre staff have met with the ministry. They've asked for a timeline of when funding will be released. So through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister, can the minister today let Ontarians know when the ministry will have an answer on whether these funds will be released?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Let me be clear: The previous Liberal government had 15 years to address the increase that these sexual assault centres and rape crisis centres were dealing with, and they chose, on the eve of an election, to promise much-needed funding to these centres without attaching funding to that promise.

Mr. Speaker, we take the needs that these centres are facing very seriously and are working closely with those centres and with victims across the province to ensure that we are meeting the needs that they have, and to do so in a sustainable way.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: My question is for the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. Yesterday, the minister announced plans for our government to reform Tarion. For most Ontarians, buying a home is the most expensive decision they will make in their life, but it's not just about expense. Every Ontarian should feel safe and secure in their home. Too many Ontarians have told me that this is not the case. I have been told and I have heard a number of stories from many of my constituents and across the province about the stress and frustration they felt while dealing with Tarion.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: Could you tell us what steps you are taking to deal with the problems faced by too many Ontarians when dealing with Tarion?

Hon. Bill Walker: I'd like to thank the honourable member from Mississauga—Erin Mills, Sheref Sabawy, for his excellent question. I too have heard stories of stress and frustration across this province. For our government, one thing is clear: Tarion is broken. That is why I was happy to announce yesterday in Port Hope, with my colleague the great member from Northumberland—Peterborough South, David Piccini, that our government for the people is transforming Tarion.

Our government is establishing a new, separate regulator from Tarion for new home builders and vendors. We're also exploring the feasibility of a multi-provider model for new home warranties. We're introducing new initiatives to better inform and protect purchasers of cancelled con-

dominium projects and, Mr. Speaker, we intend to introduce proposed legislation that, if passed, would require Tarion to make executive board compensation publicly available, to rebalance the board based on a broader skills matrix. Through these actions, we are cleaning the mess at Tarion in order to put the people of Ontario first.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I would like to thank the minister for the action he is taking to bring relief to countless Ontario families.

I want to lay out some of the most common complaints I hear about dealing with Tarion. First, Tarion is unresponsive, difficult to deal with and not transparent. To make matters worse, Tarion is responsible not only for home warranties but also for regulating builders and vendors in the ministry. The Honourable Justice Douglas Cunningham even addressed these issues in his 2016 independent report.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain how his plan addresses these concerns as part of our plan to strengthen consumer protection in this province?

Hon. Bill Walker: Thank you very much again to my colleague the honourable member for Mississauga—Erin Mills for his excellent question.

Unfortunately, the previous Liberal government did very little with the Honourable Justice Douglas Cunningham's report. Noted in Justice Cunningham's report is an inherent conflict of interest in the current structure of Tarion that leaves new homeowners vulnerable. Establishing a separate regulator from Tarion for the new home builders and vendors program will address this conflict of interest that currently exists and start to return trust to the people of Ontario.

Our intent to introduce proposed legislation that, if passed, will make executive compensation at Tarion publicly available and rebalance the board for a more equal representation will create transparency and accountability at Tarion. We will be consulting about the viability of a multi-provider model for home warranties as well as listening to all those affected by issues with Tarion to ensure our reforms deal with the root of the problem.

Mr. Speaker, these are just the first steps on the road to reforming Tarion and strengthening consumer protections in this province. We will continue to move forward with strengthening consumer protection for the people of Ontario.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Deputy Premier. London parents of children with autism are united in opposing the changes to the autism program, whether they are on or off the wait-list. Two of these London parents are at Queen's Park today.

Brandi Tapp's five-year-old son Henry was diagnosed with severe autism at age two. Henry is a beautiful little boy who is non-verbal and incontinent. After three years on the wait-list, Henry started the autism program and has already made progress in just two months. His parents are heartbroken that the changes to the program will rip Henry's therapy away from him.

Speaker, how can this government justify a plan that will deny Henry and thousands like him the intensive supports he is finally receiving?

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks to the member opposite for bringing Brandi here today. I appreciate her concern.

We are trying to bring forward a plan and we are going to bring forward a plan that is fair and equitable and sustainable. There were 23,000 children in Ontario being denied support from their Ontario government. What we have done is put a plan in place that will clear the wait-list for diagnosis by doubling the investment into diagnostic hubs; and we are going to directly fund parents so that they can have choice, whether behavioural therapy works for them or whether technological aids work for them. We are going to empower parents' choice with a direct-funding model.

I am resolute in the fact that we must support every child, not just 25% of them. Ignoring and turning a blind eye to three quarters of the children who are on a wait-list is unacceptable to me. I think it's important that the member opposite is truthful with her constituents and allows them to understand that that wait—

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

1130

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Again to the Deputy Premier: Sarah Farrants is also here today from London and her son is on the wait-list. Sarah is the mother of another beautiful little boy, three-year-old Mason. Mason is non-verbal, can be aggressive with others and runs off at any time. After two years of desperately seeking answers, Mason was diagnosed with autism in October and is now on the wait-list.

The estimated annual cost for Mason's therapy is \$80,000 but the new program will only cover a tiny fraction of these costs. Without the therapy that Mason needs, Sarah can't find a daycare spot for him and she is terrified for his safety if she sends him to kindergarten in the fall.

Speaker, how can this government justify a plan that will deny Mason and thousands like him who are on the wait-list the intensive therapy he is waiting for?

Interjections.

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

Minister, response?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: The member opposite has been in this House for the past three days, where I have been very clear that under the old plan, the wait-list was endless. For her to suggest to Mason's parents that he would get off a wait-list at any point in time is unconscionable, because she understands that that is false hope, which is why we had to change the program. We were not supporting three quarters of children like Mason in the province of Ontario because they were languishing on a wait-list.

This way, within the next 18 months, Mason will be off the wait-list. Mason will be eligible for direct funding and Mason's parents are going to be able to choose how he best gets support, whether that's behavioural therapy, technological aid, caregiver training or respite care. We remain

committed in this House to clearing that wait-list in the next 18 months so children like Mason will get a fighting chance.

POLICE SERVICES

Mrs. Amy Fee: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Our government for the people has remained committed to public safety across this great province. The daily duties of a police officer are dangerous and the brave men and women of our police services deserve our respect and support.

The previous Liberal government's legislation, Bill 175, represented a significant step backwards. It was a step backwards for policing in Ontario at a time when the government, the police and the people should have been partners in the name of public safety. It demonstrated to the people of Ontario that the previous Liberal government did not respect the work that our police officers do to keep us safe.

Mr. Speaker, could the minister please let us know how our government's Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act will better provide support for police officers and keep people safe in my riding of Kitchener South–Hespeler and across Ontario?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: To the member from Kitchener South–Hespeler, you have been a very busy parliamentarian and I very much appreciate your interest in Bill 68.

You and I and many members of our caucus have seen the incredible work our police do each and every day to keep our families safe. So much of this work is silent, preventive and unseen but sometimes it requires them to put themselves in harm's way and occasionally it requires them to make difficult life-or-death decisions in the blink of an eye.

Every day our police officers can be counted on to protect us. They have always had our back. Mr. Speaker, it's about time they have a government that has theirs.

Last fall, our government announced changes to protect police officers who attempt to save a life by delivering naloxone. Our government's Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act is based on this same principle. The police should not be punished for keeping us safe and Bill 68 will ensure that that is the case.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mrs. Amy Fee: Thank you for that response and certainly for all the work you are doing for our police officers across this province.

Mr. Speaker, as a member of this government for the people, I am proud to stand here today and know that we have kept another promise that we made to the people in Ontario. This proposed legislation will make good on our government's promise to fix the policing legislation the previous Liberal government broke.

By proposing the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act, our government is acting on its commitment to restore the relationship between the government and the police to one of mutual respect and dedication.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister highlight now for us some of the other key aspects of our proposed legislation?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I thank the member for her question. It's time to put public safety first. Our government for the people is listening to police, and our proposed legislation delivers rational solutions to fix the issues plagued by the previous Liberal government's Bill 175.

The Liberal bill included a laundry list of police services that could be privatized. This created a fear that if you called 911, someone other than a police officer would show up at your door. If passed, our legislation will restore trust that, in an emergency, a police officer will answer your call.

The previous government's legislation did not consider the principles of fairness or due process for our police officers. Not only was this unfair, it was disrespectful to the police officers who risk their lives to keep us safe. If passed, our legislation will make the disciplinary process fair to police officers. Police will no longer be treated as if they are guilty until proven innocent.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Premier. Last week, I had the pleasure of meeting Andrea and Erik, the proud parents of five-year-old Henrik. Henrik is autistic and was non-verbal before he began IBI therapy. After three years of therapy, Henrik now attends kindergarten, has friends, makes eye contact and calls his parents mom and dad.

Consistency and repetition are fundamental for children with autism, but this government's changes to the autism program put Henrik's growth in jeopardy. Access to consistent therapy is necessary for Henrik to build on his progress.

Parents tell me this government's new program will steal their children's smiles, rob their words and take away their friends. Under this government's plan, Henrik won't receive the 30 to 40 hours of therapy per week he has so greatly benefited from. Appropriate support is not false hope.

Mr. Speaker, why is this government forcing parents like Andrea to do more with less?

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I want to say thank you to the member opposite for bringing Henrik's story to the Legislative Assembly. He sounds like an amazing child, and I'm glad that you are an advocate for him.

Let's be perfectly clear, and I hate to sound like a broken record: We have 23,000 children who are being denied support by their Ontario government today. When I assumed office six months ago, the first issue I was briefed on was the long wait-list in the autism program, as well as the fact that it was bankrupt.

I understand and I appreciate the passion from the member opposite, but I have an equal passion to ensure that every single child in Ontario who has autism has access to support from their Ontario government. That is why we are going to clear the wait-list, why we doubled the investment in diagnostic hubs, why we'll be sending more support to northern Ontario, and why we are going

to introduce and empower parents for a choice for services that they believe are best suited for their child.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary? The member for London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Maria Desa is a constituent of mine who has an eight-year-old son with autism. Maria has said that the government's plan will only support her son for two months. She is a seasonal worker with no health benefits. With services being so expensive, she is thinking of selling her home just to make sure her son still receives the therapy he deserves.

She told me, "My son cannot speak out against this. He is non-verbal. I need to be his voice. This is going to be terrible for our family and others."

Maria wants to know, why won't this government commit to providing services for children like Maria's son and the support they need and deserve?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much to the member from London–Fanshawe for bringing her constituent's concerns to the floor of this assembly. I do appreciate Maria being an advocate for her child. If I held the same beliefs, I would probably be in the same boat.

But my commitment is to ensure that every single child in the province of Ontario who has autism has access to service from their Ontario government.

I don't understand why the NDP supported the previous Liberal plan that excluded three out of four children in the province of Ontario with autism. I also don't understand why they don't stand up and defend those 23,000 children who are on an endless wait-list with no end in sight.

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We are standing on this side of the House and part of that side of the House to ensure that every child has a fighting chance and that their parents have the support they need to provide their child with the best possible outcome.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Speaker, just recently, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, as well as the Minister of Infrastructure, visited Hotel Dieu Shaver Health and Rehabilitation Centre in Niagara to announce a \$500,000 planning grant for the proposed expansion of rehabilitation services. I've heard from many of my constituents who are grateful that our government is making the investments necessary to build a health care system centred around the patient.

I want to thank the ministers for their commitment to the people of Niagara, as well as the incredible staff at Hotel Dieu Shaver, such as many of the nurses who are in the Legislature today, for their great service to so many who have benefited from their care.

Can the minister please explain why these projects are so important not only for the region of Niagara, but also for the province as a whole?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I'd like to thank the member from Niagara West for his question and also for welcoming me and the Minister of Infrastructure to Niagara.

As many of us know, there is an increasing demand for rehabilitation services in Ontario. Patients want to know that the care they need will be there for them when and where they need it. That's why I was proud to visit Niagara to announce a \$500,000 planning grant for the proposed expansion project at Hotel Dieu Shaver.

Our government is determined to ensure that everyone in Ontario has access to high-quality, reliable public health care that they expect and deserve.

This is one of the many essential health care projects we are proud to be investing in as we remain committed to building a public health care system that is centred around the patient.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Thank you, Minister, for your answer.

Speaker, after 15 years of Liberal waste, neglect and mismanagement, patients across Niagara know that they need and deserve better health care. Providing support for better facilities is vital to improving rehabilitation services for my neighbours, and I know my constituents appreciate the work of the ministers and their commitment to meeting the needs of the families in the region.

Can the minister please explain how this planning grant aims at providing the best possible care for patients in Niagara before the first shovel even goes into the ground?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I want to thank the member for Niagara West for welcoming the Deputy Premier and me to his region this month.

Mr. Speaker, infrastructure is more than steel, bricks and mortar. Infrastructure is about the people that it helps; it is the facilities like the Hotel Dieu Shaver, where people with complex care needs get better. It takes a lot of work to make sure good infrastructure is built in our province. That's why I'm so pleased that our government for the people is investing in the early planning work for this proposed rehabilitation expansion at Hotel Dieu Shaver.

People have told us that investing in health care infrastructure is a top priority.

I'm excited to see how the development of these projects' plans helps to expand rehabilitation options for the member's neighbours and the people all across this region of Ontario.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Good morning.

Lori, in my riding, has a daughter who is about to turn 18. She was recently diagnosed with autism and also suffers from mental health challenges, but she has been unable to get access to the support she needs. Recently, Lori's daughter tried to take her own life, and that may have been avoided had the support been there when she needed it.

Speaker, Lori's daughter will age out of the Special Services at Home program and the Ontario Autism Program

in September, likely without ever receiving any of the care that was promised.

Can the Deputy Premier commit today to releasing those funds so this young girl comes off the wait-list and gets the help it has been proven she so desperately needs?

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Good morning to the member opposite. I thank him for the question and I thank him for bringing Lori's story to the floor of this assembly. It's stories like hers that motivated me to clear the wait-list in the next 18 months. We feel it's unacceptable for children to languish on an endless wait-list without any level of support from their Ontario government, which is why we're going to ensure that those three out of four children who are being denied support right now are given the support they need.

He also talked about Special Services at Home. I would be happy to meet with the member opposite after question period to get more details with that particular program and to have my staff work with his staff to see if there's a way that we can support her once she transitions into adulthood. That is a very important issue that we are looking at.

I'll continue to work with the member opposite to address these issues.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Parkdale–High Park, supplementary?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Parents in my riding have been contacting me, furious and frustrated that the long wait-list to receive autism treatment continues despite the minister's claim that the wait-list will be eliminated.

One such constituent is Lorena, the mother of a wonderful little boy, Bryan. Bryan has already been on the wait-list for almost two years. Lorena called the ministry after the government's announcement, only to learn that the wait-list is still another 18 months. Nothing's changed.

Speaker, can the minister tell Lorena why her son is being forced to wait years for a fraction of the therapy he needs?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: What a great question. I could have written it myself, Speaker, because the entire motivation for the plan that we announced two weeks ago was to clear the wait-list for Lorena's son. That is what we want to do. Under the previous Liberal government, that wait-list could have gone on for 18 years. That is unacceptable. It's unconscionable. It's unfair. It's inequitable. I'll tell you something else: It was unsustainable.

What we have done is we have increased our spend in this ministry from \$256 million, which was budgeted, to \$321 million. We're doubling the investment into diagnostic hubs. Once children are diagnosed, they will then have an ability to be directly funded from their Ontario government.

For the first time in the history of this province, every single child who requires support from their Ontario government will receive it. I'm delighted that she can go back to Lorena and let her know that within 18 months I'll have that list cleared—because the Liberals didn't get it done.

AMATEUR SPORT

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Mr. Speaker, to the minister: I was pleased to hear that you travelled to Red Deer, Alberta, last week with ministers responsible for sport all across Canada to meet with the federal, provincial and territorial leaders. I also understand that the minister attended the kickoff for the Canada Games while he was there.

As we all know, sport is a very big part of Ontario. It's ingrained in our DNA when we are born, when we're on the trails, when we're running, swimming, hiking or biking. As we've seen with many files from the previous government, many things can be improved, so I wanted to ask the minister: Can you update this House on your meeting in Red Deer?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the member: I'd like to thank you for that question. It was an honour for me to attend the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers of Sport meeting in cold, but beautiful, Red Deer, Alberta. While I was there, I also had the chance to see Team Ontario who were there for the 2019 Canada Games, which kicked off just this past weekend. Ontario is sending a full contingent of 350 athletes, 45 coaches and 52 other support positions, including managers and technical support volunteers, from 111 different municipalities across the province.

The Canada Games are an important part of the development of young athletes here in Ontario and across the country, showcasing their tremendous skills. I would like to take this time to wish Team Ontario good luck the rest of the way and to let members and those watching at home know that you can catch the games on Canada Games's website and TSN until March 3.

Good luck to Team Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have available for question period this morning.

VISITORS

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I'd like to welcome Liam Warren from St. Catharines, from the francophone youth Parliament, this morning at the Legislature. Welcome, Liam.

I'd also like to welcome my fellow co-workers from the Hotel Dieu Shaver, here to make sure the expansion funding and shovels do hit the ground.

WORLD THINKING DAY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member from Toronto–St. Paul's on a point of order.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Since we don't sit on Fridays, I wanted to give a special shout-out to the Girl Guides of Canada national office, located in my riding.

Each year, on February 22, Girl Guides and Girl Scouts across the world celebrate World Thinking Day. It is dedicated to the group of girls who took the lead in 1909 and

demanded that Lord Baden-Powell, who formed the Boy Scouts movement, create something for the girls.

This year's World Thinking Day theme is "Leadership." World Thinking Day is a special day to reflect on issues that are important to girls and women around the world.

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

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome Angela Cooper Brathwaite, who is the president of RNAO. Welcome to Queen's Park. It's great to see you here.

BIRTH OF MEMBER'S CHILD

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Todd Smith: I just want to congratulate our member from Mississauga East–Cooksville, Mr. Rasheed. He and his wife, Sofiya, had a brand new baby earlier this week: Aisha Aleena Rasheed. We welcome her to the world.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Congratulations.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Kiiwetinoong has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Indigenous Affairs concerning Cat Lake First Nation's declaration of emergency. This matter will be debated on Tuesday at 6 p.m.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made in the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Miller, Parry Sound–Muskoka, assumes ballot item number 85 and Mr. Babikian assumes ballot item number 67.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a deferred vote on government notice of motion number 30, relating to the allocation of time on Bill 48, An Act to amend various acts in relation to education and child care.

Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1152 to 1157.

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

On February 20, 2019, Mr. Smith, Bay of Quinte, moved government notice of motion number 30 relating to allocation of time on Bill 48.

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

Ayes

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

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

Nays

Andrew, Jill	French, Jennifer K.	Mantha, Michael
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gates, Wayne	Monteith-Farrell, Judith
Arthur, Ian	Glover, Chris	Morrison, Suze
Begum, Doly	Gretzky, Lisa	Natyshak, Taras
Bell, Jessica	Harden, Joel	Rakocevic, Tom
Berns-McGown, Rima	Hassan, Faisal	Sattler, Peggy
Bisson, Gilles	Hatfield, Percy	Schreiner, Mike
Bourgouin, Guy	Horwath, Andrea	Singh, Sara
Burch, Jeff	Karpoche, Bhutla	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Coteau, Michael	Lalonde, Marie-France	Stiles, Marit
Fife, Catherine	Lindo, Laura Mae	Vanhof, John
Fraser, John	Mamakwa, Sol	Yarde, Kevin

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 66; the nays are 36.

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

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): This House stands in recess until 1 o'clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1201 until 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I would like to welcome the students from Ryerson and the University of Toronto who are here with us, and others will be joining us later: Abdifatah Kilas, Zeinab Mohamed, Maryama Ahmed, Safia Abdale, Ayoub Farah, Rahmo Noor, Amino Ali,

Mohamed-Najib Farah, Sahra Hashi and Umalkhair Ahmed. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

Ms. Doly Begum: It is my absolute honour and privilege to stand here today and recognize February 21, International Mother Language Day. Here in Ontario and around the world, we celebrate today to promote awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity. For all of us, language is a part of our identity, a part of our development, a part of our culture. It connects us to our roots.

While today is marked as a celebration around the world, its roots are in Bangladesh. As the first Bangladeshi Canadian elected to public office in this country, today is a day I hold close to my heart. In 1952, students took to the streets of Dhaka to protect their right to speak and preserve their mother language, facing brutal violence, where many lost their lives. We must remember their sacrifice and the sacrifice of many throughout the years to protect their mother languages.

This movement to protect language rights is also critical in our province, especially as we stand with our francophone and Indigenous communities, who continue to fight the increasing threat to their mother languages. We cannot forget the cruel legacy of regulation 17 and residential schools, tools used by our own governments to suppress mother language rights. We must recommit ourselves to true reconciliation every single day.

As we celebrate International Mother Language Day, let's come together and build a better future, one where everyone's mother language is protected and celebrated.

INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

Miss Kinga Surma: I want to thank the member opposite. We're speaking about the same thing today.

Every year since 2000, International Mother Language Day has been observed on February 21. I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge this day for promoting linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism.

Many of you will recall that prior to the break I presented a motion to recognize the international languages program provided by the Toronto Catholic District School Board. I fully support the study of international languages, and I thank all of the members of the House for their support.

We know that learning languages is incredibly healthy for the brain development of young children, but it goes beyond that. Mother languages are fundamental in preserving and developing our various heritages. They provide us with an identity, communication, social integration and cultural diversity. I truly enjoyed listening to other members share their stories about languages in the House.

Languages open the doors of opportunity. They keep traditions alive, evoke memories—and my favourite is the unique modes of thinking and expression within cultures.

We must make progress in mother-tongue-based multilingual education and understand its importance, particularly in early schooling, so that we can ensure that multilingual societies exist for future generations to come.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Jessica Bell: It took over 10 years for the subway extension to reach York University. One would expect that the 50,000 people who work and study at the university would be delighted by the subway's arrival, but over 17,000 are so angry that they signed a petition demanding transit improvements.

Here's what's wrong. GO buses and York region buses used to travel to the centre of York University but are now being diverted to the Pioneer Village and Highway 407 subway stops, which is forcing commuters to make a very unpleasant choice: They have to pay two fares where originally they paid one, or they have to walk up to three kilometres to get into the centre of York University.

I believe this is very heartless and thoughtless transit planning. It is an injustice to force transit riders, who are already paying some of the highest fares in Canada, to pay up to a thousand dollars more a year just to ride a subway stop they didn't have to ride before. It's an injustice to further lengthen the travel that students and workers have to have, to have even longer commutes to do that unnecessary second trip. And it is cruel to force low-income people with mobility difficulties to choose between spending money they don't have or walking up to three kilometres on icy sidewalks.

This government likes to say that it's York University's fault that the buses are not going to York University campus. I have a letter from York University saying they want the buses to come back.

Please fix this issue. Bring the buses back. Bring in proper fare integration so riders don't have to pay twice. And properly fund transit systems so that riders, including York University students and workers, can get to work affordably.

AFFAIRES FRANCOPHONES

M^{me} Natalia Kusendova: Hier soir, j'ai eu le plaisir de rencontrer les élèves du secondaire de l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie. Notre gouvernement est fier de soutenir les Ontariens et Ontariennes francophones en les accueillant à Queen's Park pour leur faire découvrir ce que signifie être parlementaire dans notre province. Il est toujours merveilleux de voir les jeunes d'aujourd'hui qui participent au processus politique et, en particulier, d'une manière qui leur permet de refléter et de promouvoir l'identité française du Canada.

En tant que membre de l'APF, je comprends bien la valeur que les jeunes parlementaires apportent à nos communautés. J'ai été vraiment impressionnée par les questions et les idées avancées par les étudiants lorsque

j'ai parlé avec eux. J'ai beaucoup de confiance en leur capacité à accomplir de grandes choses.

Je suis également fière d'annoncer que je représenterai notre province lors de mon voyage au Vietnam la semaine prochaine dans le cadre d'une délégation qui participera à une conférence sur les affaires des femmes francophones. Je souhaite utiliser mon rôle directeur pour au Réseau des femmes parlementaires à promouvoir la participation des femmes à la vie politique. Le Réseau des femmes parlementaires est un forum qui réunit des femmes de perspectives variées et de toutes les allégeances politiques du monde entier. Cet effort international permet aux femmes des quatre coins du monde de partager leurs expériences, d'échanger des idées et de collaborer pour réaliser un meilleur équilibre entre les sexes.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to rise today and talk about health care.

Over the winter break, I posted a video to Facebook asking for residents to tell me what they thought about the government's leaked document about potentially privatizing parts of our health care system. The video reached over—think about this—half a million people. Thousands took the time to comment, share and engage with the video, and one thing was very clear—Mr. Ford, this message is directly from the constituents who tasked me to be their voice in this Legislature: We say no to health care privatization. We believe in a medical care system that is publicly funded and publicly delivered and based on health needs, not on the size of one's credit card.

Mr. Speaker, I've spent my entire adult life speaking out against the privatization of health care, and I'm not about to stop now. From diagnostic scans to dental care to private parking lots that gouge residents in times of emergency, enough is enough. It's time to talk about expanding our public health care system, not selling it off.

I've said it before and I'll say it again: Health care is in crisis across this province. People are waiting in hallways for hours, they are being rushed out of hospitals, and those who need mental health supports aren't getting them from front-line workers, who are doing everything they can.

Right now, in our province, instead of focusing on tax breaks for corporations and rolling back health and safety measures to protect workers, let's focus on putting public dollars into health care. Instead of spending money on major government appointments, let's fix health care.

We can do this in Niagara Falls tomorrow by moving forward our hospital project and putting shovels in the ground. If we do that, we can put local people to work, local businesses, and provide decent public health care in a reasonable time for our residents.

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BUILDING BRIDGES EVENT IN GUELPH

Mr. Mike Schreiner: One of the many things I love about Guelph is that it is an inclusive, caring community that welcomes, supports and embraces newcomers.

An important annual community event that fosters inclusivity and community connections is the Building Bridges event hosted by the Muslim Society of Guelph every January. MSOG president Muhammed Sayyed and his wife, Sara Sayyed, the board and volunteers do a wonderful job of bringing people of diverse faiths and backgrounds together to honour community leaders and to strengthen bonds of friendship.

At a time when some in Canada want to divide us with anti-immigrant sentiment, Islamophobia and other forms of hate, the Muslim Society of Guelph works hard to bring people together. We are stronger when we embrace and celebrate our diversity, when we stand united to build inclusive, caring, sustainable communities.

I wish that every MPP and every Ontarian could experience the Building Bridges event. I want to thank the Muslim Society of Guelph for bringing it to our community.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I rise today to recognize February as Black History Month. I was tremendously proud to host my first Black History Month reception in my office in the riding of King–Vaughan with so many leaders in non-profit and business in our community who are making a difference.

I am proud to stand in recognition of the contributions that Canadians of African and Caribbean descent have made to this country since Confederation. It is great Canadians like Lincoln Alexander, a pioneer, a veteran, someone who served his country, the first Black member of Parliament, the first Black minister of the crown, the first Black Lieutenant Governor, appointed by a Conservative—he was a Conservative. It is men and women like Viola Desmond and others who have left a legacy on the fabric of our country and who continue to make a difference.

In my riding, Shernett Martin, the executive director of the Vaughan African Canadian Association, has been a tremendous asset in making sure that other communities within Vaughan understand the sacrifice and contribution of this community. The fourth-largest community in Vaughan is the Black community. I'm proud to stand with them to recognize their contribution, I'm proud to celebrate their history, and I'm proud to say that on this side of the House, joining all members of this Parliament, we stand proudly to recognize the immeasurable contributions the Black community is making in this country every single day.

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I've written a letter to the government.

“Dear government,

“I want to believe that you are committed to reconciliation with First Peoples.

“But, in October, when I rose to celebrate the amazing work of the Healing of the Seven Generations in my riding of Kitchener Centre, I was having trouble seeing how your commitment was linked to real action. That’s what reconciliation requires.

“It’s true: Healing of the Seven Generations provides brilliant programming, some of which is paid for by Ontario Trillium Foundation funding. But they have to do this because Ontario—their provincial partner—has not stepped in to address food insecurity, poverty and cultural sensitivity needed to treat First Peoples as people in Ontario.

“And last week, while I was at Queen’s Park hosting Black leaders from across Ontario alongside the members of the NDP’s official Black caucus, the Healing of the Seven Generations was welcoming guests to their first First Peoples healing and wellness conference, entitled We All Pull Together.

“So, with an aim to promote real healing, dear government, I’m putting my question out there with great sincerity:

“How can we heal the relationship between First Peoples and settlers on the land when the people of Cat Lake First Nation are suffering?”

“How can we heal the relationship between First Peoples and any level of government when the people of Cat Lake are watching the provincial and federal governments fight about who should be responsible and who should step in?”

“Fighting—while people are literally dying because they live in conditions that we have to name as they are: environmental racism?”

“Dear government: It’s time to do better.

“Ontario is watching.”

ED STAFFORD

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Good afternoon. I want to tell this House about a gentleman I met named Edward Stafford, a retired veteran who lives in Etobicoke–Lakeshore. I had the pleasure of visiting Mr. Stafford on his 98th birthday.

He served for five years in the Canadian military during the Second World War. Trooper Ed Stafford was one of 93,000 soldiers who fought in the campaign to liberate Italy during the war. Nearly 6,000 soldiers paid the ultimate price during this campaign.

Ed Stafford’s story is one of bravery and courage. He served, fought and survived so that others can live. His contribution, along with that of thousands of other Canadians, was instrumental in victory for the Allied forces.

Last month, Ed was honoured by the Peace Through Valour campaign, which works to recognize the bravery and sacrifice of those who fought in the Italian campaign during World War II. Ed received a replica monument depicting Ortona, the Italian town liberated from Nazi rule in 1943, thanks to the 1st Canadian Infantry Division. You can see the full-sized monument for yourself outside

Toronto city hall, just a short walk south from this Legislature.

Here in Canada, we are free and at peace in this amazing country because of his bravery and sacrifice. We owe a debt of gratitude to Trooper Ed Stafford and those who fought alongside him.

EVENTS IN PETERBOROUGH– KAWARTHA

Mr. Dave Smith: I’d like to talk about two events that happened in my riding during the break that we had.

On February 1, there was the 13th annual PolarFest in Selwyn township. Selwyn township, for those of you who don’t know, is part of my riding that I love to refer to as God’s country, because that is really where God would come to vacation. At PolarFest, we had our opening ceremonies on the Friday night. It was great to be down at the beach, watching the fireworks over the lake. On February 3, we hosted a polar bear dip. I had the pleasure of being one of the judges for it. This year’s theme was “Dipping into Hockey.” The winner of the polar bear dip was a young lady who dressed up as a Toronto Maple Leaf player and held the Stanley Cup above her head as she jumped into that freezing cold water. There are probably some other images that people could have about the Stanley Cup being won by the Toronto Maple Leafs.

On February 16, for Family Day, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters hosted an ice-fishing event on Chemong Lake. It was a fabulous event that was attended not only by me, Minister Yakabuski and MPP Gila Martow, but we had more than 1,100 people come out to enjoy that. I had the pleasure of meeting two families, one from Colombia and one from Mexico. Neither family had seen winter, and they thought this was fabulous and were looking forward to coming back to Peterborough—specifically, to God’s country—one more time.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our members’ statements this afternoon.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CONSUMER PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT (RIGHT TO REPAIR ELECTRONIC PRODUCTS), 2019

LOI DE 2019 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR (DROIT DE RÉPARER LES PRODUITS ÉLECTRONIQUES)

Mr. Coteau moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 72, An Act to amend the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 respecting the repair of electronic products / Projet de loi 72, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2002 sur la protection du consommateur concernant la réparation des produits électroniques.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Don Valley East care to give a brief explanation of his bill?

Mr. Michael Coteau: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

We've all been there before—we've had a device fall to the ground, a daughter or son drops a device, or a tablet cracks. My bill would look at the way we repair all electronic products. We know that when you go to the manufacturer, to replace that product can sometimes be more expensive than the original product or the value of the product.

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My piece of proposed legislation would change that. It would make manufacturers provide schematics. It would allow for parts, it would allow for manuals, and it would allow for any type of diagnostic software to be provided to the end-user so a third party could actually fix it, or you could fix it at home yourself.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS DAY

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure today to rise, as the minister responsible for women's issues, to mark Human Trafficking Awareness Day, or, as I refer to it, sex trafficking.

Tomorrow is Ontario's Human Trafficking Awareness Day. This important event was established thanks to the hard work of my cabinet colleague the Honourable Laurie Scott, the Minister of Labour. Minister Scott, while in opposition, brought forward and fought for a private member's bill years ago called Saving the Girl Next Door Act. As an opposition MPP, she was fierce in advocating for our province's most vulnerable women and girls. Her work began an important discussion around sex trafficking, or what I like to call Ontario's dirty little secret.

This day is needed because right here in our backyard of Queen's Park, victims of human and sex trafficking are slipping through the cracks. It's happening to young women all across Ontario by criminals in our province. It's happening blocks away from Queen's Park in our province's most populous city, Toronto. It's happening along the 401 in places like Kitchener, London and Windsor, and it's happening in rural and remote communities across Ontario, from Renfrew to Kenora. It's happening in every single community in this province. As Joylene MacNeil from the Durham police told us, it's happening in every hotel in Ontario. Nowhere in Ontario has been left untouched.

To put an end to it, we must first shed light on it. We need to raise awareness. We need to have a frank

conversation that, quite frankly, is uncomfortable, because these criminals who are responsible for this are utilizing these young women for guns-and-gangs profit. They hide so well that even when we see trafficking, we often don't know what we're looking at. It may simply look like a teenage girl on Instagram who is acting out against her parents or a new immigrant or refugee who is working in a low-wage job. But there is something far more sinister and traumatic being done to those women.

It's not news to our police or front-line agencies that work to end this crime and that work to support, most importantly, the survivors. They tell us that these crimes often go unreported.

But here's what we do know, Speaker: Over 90% of the cases involving sex trafficking—and over 90% of the victims are women and girls. Girls as young as 11 have been trafficked in our province. Over a quarter of them are under 18. They're children. This is child abuse. The vast majority of traffickers are men, and two thirds of police-reported cases nationally occur right here in our province.

Many have a similar story behind them. I've heard it time and time again from police, from survivors and from the incredible people who work on the front lines and help survivors rebuild their lives, like Cynthia Bland from Ottawa's Voice Found. Cynthia herself had been trafficked.

First, there is a person with a vulnerability. That person is often young and female, but boys and young men are not immune. Their vulnerability could be almost anything. They could be dependent on drugs and willing to do anything to get help to get them, or they could be lonely or have low self-esteem. It could be a young girl who got in a fight with her parents and then was lured, and then coerced.

We've been sold this TV and movie lie that women who are forced into the sex trade are violently kidnapped, but in reality, today's sex trafficking is far more manipulative than that. Traffickers find the person, often online or sometimes in real life, like at the Eaton Centre food court or the Bayshore food court or any shopping centre across this province. Recruitment can happen anywhere.

They hone in on the vulnerability of the young woman. They give that person whatever it is that they want or need in that moment. It could be a purse. It could be a \$10 iTunes card. It could be companionship. It could be a home or a job. It could be new friends or something else. They groom the person, doing whatever it takes to build a bond in the short term, and then that's when the exploitation begins.

The targeted person is often told they owe a debt and it can only be repaid through sex. This is hugely profitable for criminal activity. Speaker, that's because, as the Ottawa police have told me, unlike cocaine, a girl can be sold multiple times a day, multiple times a week, multiple times a year.

Victims become so manipulated and brainwashed that they may not even realize what's happening to them is a crime, that it's not their fault, and that they should receive love and respect. Most of all they deserve freedom because

what this really is—Ontario’s dirty little secret—is sex slavery. These young women may believe their trafficker loves or cares for them or that they’re better off staying rather than leaving. They are controlled through promises, threats, drugs and alcohol, dependence and violence.

Victims come in all shapes and sizes. They come from all walks of life. They could be coming from a prominent family or they could be living on the streets. Sex traffickers do not discriminate so long as the young woman is vulnerable. It could be your daughter, the police officer’s daughter in your neighbourhood, or your children’s teacher’s daughter.

The dangerous criminals who are preying on women and girls, as I said, are indiscriminating, and they’re unrelenting. Once these women and girls escape, the road to healing is very difficult. When their trafficker is finished with them, they’re often destitute, left with no credit. They are broken, dealing with intense psychological challenges, and they’re alone.

I know this is hard to hear. We don’t like to think that there are people among us who are suffering like this, but I believe there is hope and a way forward. Everyone in this assembly, everyone in this province, has a role to play. We can keep an eye on the kids we know. We can learn the signs. We may notice changes in behaviour, whether that’s secrecy, new clothes they can’t afford, or other items like a new iPhone, a new older friend or boyfriend, or that they’re staying out late or missing school. Kids who run away time and time again are sometimes being trafficked.

We can also make sure kids understand how to stay safe on social media, even from people who at the outset seem harmless, friendly and attractive.

We need to build linkages with potential partners like banks, that can track the illicit funds; like hotels, that can train their staff on what to look for if a teenaged girl is locked in a hotel room for days on end; like restaurants, particularly fast-food establishments, that will add posters in a bathroom explaining what this is, but, more importantly for a young woman who may be in that bathroom, on how to escape; like shopping centre food courts, where there can be better security, with more eyes and ears on the young women who are being traded; and like convention centres and planners, explaining to their guests what sex trafficking really is.

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But most of all, we can remove the shame from victims through a frank and open conversation, which is why I am proud to announce here in the assembly today that I have tasked the member from Cambridge and the member from Mississauga Centre to co-chair a series of discussions and round tables across this province, so we can better coordinate with survivors, front-line police officers and parents across this great province of ours.

I’m also pleased to announce that I have been announced as the co-chair on a national task table with the federal minister of women’s issues, so we can understand that sex trafficking doesn’t just stay in one jurisdiction. This is a national issue. This is a provincial crisis. It is Ontario’s dirty little secret, and it is our collective

responsibility to take a stand against it and ensure that we are creating more awareness, and supporting survivors with more supports.

Let’s make sure every person in Ontario knows what sex trafficking really is. We, together, must share Ontario’s dirty little secret, and then must we all, together, get to work at ending it.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

Ms. Suze Morrison: I’d like to start by taking a moment to thank the workers and volunteers across the province who help those who experience human trafficking by providing counselling, support, work training and so, so much more.

I’d also like to acknowledge that people affected by human trafficking are disproportionately vulnerable women. According to Statistics Canada, 95% of people affected by human trafficking between 2005 and 2016 were women, and a quarter of those were under the age of 18—children, Speaker. Human traffickers prey on these young children, especially those who are experiencing homelessness. We know that queer and trans children particularly are at risk, because they experience higher levels of homelessness because of discrimination and victimization.

All women, from those who have experienced human trafficking, to survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence, deserve to be a top priority of this government. If this government is truly committed to ending gender-based violence, then why have they cancelled the provincial round table on ending violence against women?

If this government is truly committed to ending gender-based violence, then why are sexual assault survivors currently sitting on 18-month-long wait-lists for counselling and the support that they desperately need?

If this government is truly committed to ending gender-based violence, then why, Speaker, are they holding funding for the 29 rape crisis centres in Ontario hostage—funding that was promised last spring; funding that has been withheld from them for months and months on end.

Where exactly does this government expect survivors of human trafficking to go when they need counselling supports? Does the minister think that asking a human trafficking survivor to wait 18 months for counselling is appropriate?

Here in Toronto, the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre/Multi-cultural Women Against Rape has served our community for 45 years. They provide a 24/7 phone hotline for survivors, free counselling, court supports and so much more. The full-time staff there are doing the very best that they can with the very limited resources that they have.

Their ask of this government is simple: The rape crisis centres want the funding that they were promised—a 30% increase in funding over the next three years. At this point, they are losing hope that it will ever be delivered.

Nicole Pietsch, head of the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres, suggested that it has “been a struggle to communicate with” the Attorney General’s “office and that it’s taken many phone calls and emails ... to get updates....” She said that she’s disappointed. Every day, rape

crisis centres across Ontario provide essential services to survivors, but the worry for the future of their organizations is growing.

We are living in an unprecedented time. In the midst of the #MeToo movement, and as we see an increase in high-profile cases of sexual violence—cases like Ghomeshi, cases like Kavanaugh—survivors are finally finding the courage to come forward and get the help that they need. The demand for these services grows every single day. We need to take the issue of violence against women seriously and properly invest in supports for survivors.

This government is letting survivors down by not releasing the funding that the rape crisis centres need. Deb Singh, a counsellor at the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre/Multicultural Women Against Rape, put it succinctly when she said, “The government is now saying that this is not a prioritized issue, by virtue of the Attorney General saying nothing to us.”

Speaker, as a sexual assault survivor myself, I can tell you that I certainly feel let down by this government. This government is not prioritizing the issue of gender-based violence. What we need is a commitment to eradicating gender-based violence once and for all, but, instead, we have a government that’s withholding funding from organizations. We have a government that has rolled back the sex-ed curriculum to 1998, removing vital information about consent from our classrooms. We need solutions that address the fact that Indigenous women, Black women, queer women and trans folks are disproportionately affected by gender-based violence.

I am calling, once again, on the minister and this government to do better, and at the very, very least to release the funding that was promised to rape crisis centres across this province. This government needs to start respecting survivors by funding the wraparound services that they need, and commit to a holistic approach to ending gender-based violence.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I’m rising in the House today on behalf of our Liberal caucus to recognize Human Trafficking Awareness Day.

Human trafficking is a growing issue across the country, and specifically here in Ontario. Statistics Canada’s CANSIM database tells us that over half of the incidents of human trafficking across Canada since 2009 have taken place in Ontario. Toronto and my hometown of Ottawa are two cities with the highest incidence of human trafficking as of 2015.

We know that while we’ve made a great deal of progress on both awareness and addressing human trafficking, there is much left to do. While many people see human trafficking as strictly an international issue, 63% of those trafficked in Ontario were Canadian citizens. We also know that individuals who are most vulnerable as targets for human trafficking include Indigenous people, young women, at-risk youth, youth in care, migrant workers and persons with mental health and addictions issues. To end human trafficking, we must acknowledge that it disproportionately affects these groups, and our approach must reflect this fact.

The previous Liberal government consulted widely with experts, individuals with lived experience and front-line service providers to create Ontario’s Strategy to End Human Trafficking, brought forward in 2016. This plan created a community support fund, provided targeted funding to provide victim crisis assistance, and many other important steps towards curbing and ending human trafficking.

I was also very proud that in 2017 the Liberal government created the Human Trafficking Lived Experience Roundtable referred to earlier, the first of its kind in Canada. As I understand, at this point this round table has been archived, as it is not available online. We do not know its fate. We’ve heard just recently, and I will look forward to hearing more from the minister about announcements regarding a new type of round table. I look forward to hearing more about this announcement.

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From my experience as minister of community safety and corrections, I know that the police have an incredibly important role in seeing the signs of human trafficking and in intervening to get people to safety. I’m also a mom, and I want to pay my respects to all the moms out here in Ontario for whom unfortunately their children, their sons or daughters, are part of this growing issue in Ontario of human trafficking.

I want to say thank you to all police services, crisis centres, first responders, health professionals and every single person in Ontario who is working every day to make Ontario safer for all of us.

Je dis merci à tous les intervenants qui nous aident à combattre ce fléau. Merci beaucoup.

VISITORS

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Parkdale–High Park on a point of order.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: My guests have finally arrived. I’d like the opportunity to introduce them.

We have Martha McGroarty, who is a mental health advocate. With Martha are Andres Yepes; Suzanne McLean; Christina McLean; Evelyn McLean; Maureen McGroarty; Luis Garfias; Ruth McGroarty; Hanler Perez Neives; Ross Suriani; Penny Stevenson-Saunders; Michelle Watson; Sandra Turner; Diana Fuda; Nicole Rainey-Underwood; Jamie Tuttle; Shivaun Hearne; Karen Robinson; Raphael Duvoue; Sami Pritchard from the CFS; Gayle McFadden; Corey Scott from CFS; Rev. Alexa Gilmour from Windermere United Church; Karen Prosper from Arrabon House; Wendy Curnew-Harris; Ashley Davis from the political action representatives of the Mental Health Nursing Interest Group; Stephanie Legaspi, a harm reduction advocate; Kara Dean, with her son Liam, from Parkdale–High Park; John Mohler; Joanna Collaton; Beverly Swerling; Gillian Smith; Alvine Flor; Debbie Black; Jake Ford; Jason Cole and Georgina Spataro.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member from Timmins on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We have a House leaders' agreement for me to move a unanimous consent motion to reschedule an adjournment debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion. Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I move that the late show for the member for Kiiwetinoong be rescheduled to Wednesday, February 27, 2019.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Bisson is moving that the late show for the member for Kiiwetinoong be rescheduled to Wednesday, February 27, 2019. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Miller, Parry Sound–Muskoka, assumes ballot item number 76 and Mr. Lecce assumes ballot item number 85.

PETITIONS

STUDENT WORK EXPERIENCE

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I have a petition entitled "Invest in Work-Integrated Learning."

"Whereas Ontario's youth unemployment rate is consistently higher than the national average;

"Whereas it is increasingly common for even entry-level positions to require relevant work experience;

"Whereas work-integrated learning serves to develop the practical skills and professional networks that young people need to transition into the workforce;

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

"That the government of Ontario should create 27,000 new, paid work opportunities for students, recent graduates and unemployed youth in the public and private sector and the skilled trades so they can move into the workforce with real-world experience and a path to full-time employment."

I support this petition. I will be affixing my signature to it and providing it to page Cameron to deliver to the table.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Norman Miller: I have a petition with regard to the eastern hybrid wolf, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the ban on hunting and trapping in sections of Ontario to protect the eastern hybrid wolf was put in place without regard for the overall ecosystem;

"Whereas this ban has adversely affected the ability of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR), hunters and trappers to properly manage animal populations and Ontario's ecosystem;

"Whereas this ban is no longer needed and is in fact causing more damage to Ontario's ecosystem and increasing unnecessary encounters between wildlife and Ontarians;

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

"That the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry immediately lift the ban on hunting and trapping set in place to protect the eastern hybrid wolf."

I have signed this and will give it to Keya.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I have here with me almost 1,000 signatures on a petition titled, "No More Waiting for Children and Youth Mental Health Care." I'd like to thank Martha McGroarty and many of my constituents from Parkdale–High Park for making this possible.

The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas one in five children and youth in Ontario experience a mental health issue that significantly impacts their lives, and the lives of people around them;

"Whereas there are over 12,000 children and youth on the wait-list seeking mental health and addictions care;

"Whereas the wait times for children and youth seeking mental health and addictions care in the province average three months to 18 months;

"Whereas too many children and youth have died waiting for treatment, and early treatment is more likely to be effective in helping people live full and happy lives;

"Whereas the failure to take action in helping children and youth access mental health and addictions services hurts people, families and Ontario's communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately cap the wait time for children and youth seeking mental health and addictions services to 30 days after these services have been deemed essential, taking all the necessary policy and funding steps to ensure that the minister is able to enforce this cap, and provide children and youth the services they need and deserve."

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

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Dave Smith: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the ban on hunting and trapping in sections of Ontario to protect the eastern hybrid wolf was put in place without regard for the overall ecosystem;

“Whereas this ban has adversely affected the ability of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF), hunters and trappers to properly manage animal populations and Ontario’s ecosystem;

“Whereas this ban is no longer needed and is in fact causing more damage to Ontario’s ecosystem and increasing unnecessary encounters between wildlife and Ontarians;

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

“That the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry immediately lift the ban on hunting and trapping set in place to protect the eastern hybrid wolf.”

I have affixed my name to this petition, and I’ll give it to page Michelle.

SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Marit Stiles: It gives me great pleasure to introduce a petition entitled “Disabilities Do Not End at 18 Years of Age. The Time for Urgent Action Is Now!”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas on their 18th birthday, children living with developmental disabilities are cut off childhood support and services and put on two- to five-year-long wait-lists for adult support and services. There are approximately 14,000 people with developmental disabilities on the Passport wait-list in Ontario;

“Whereas there are approximately 15,000 people living with developmental disabilities on wait-lists for supported housing in Ontario, forcing people with developmental disabilities to wait decades;

“Whereas families are falling apart due to the lack of supports and services for adults with disabilities, due to enormous financial, physical and emotional stress;

“Whereas ODSP forces vulnerable adults with disabilities to live in poverty;

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

“(1) To take immediate action by passing Noah and Gregory’s Law which will ensure people with developmental disabilities and their families can live quality lives by ensuring government support;

“(2) To immediately address and fund solutions for the supported housing crisis in Ontario;

“(3) To increase monthly ODSP for people with disabilities, enabling them to live quality lives.”

I appreciate this petition being presented to me by my constituent Samantha Fashler. I agree with it, and I will be affixing my signature, and then I’ll hand it over to Pyper to table with the Clerks.

1350

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I have a stack of petitions to support Ontario families with autism.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas every child with autism deserves access to sufficient treatment and support so that they can live to their fullest potential;

“Whereas the Ontario Autism Program was badly broken under the Liberals, and the changes introduced by the Conservatives have made it worse;

“Whereas the new funding caps are based on age and income, and not the clinical needs of the child;

“Whereas Ontario needs a true investment in evidence-based autism services that meets the needs of autistic children and their families;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to invest in equitable, needs-based autism services for all children who need them.”

I completely agree with the petition, will be affixing my signature to it and giving it to page Cameron to take to the Clerk.

VETERANS MEMORIAL

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Of course, I affix my signature and give it to page Ahmad.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“No More Waiting for Children and Youth Mental Health Care.

“Whereas one in five children and youth in Ontario experience a mental health issue that significantly impacts their lives, and the lives of people around them;

“Whereas there are over 12,000 children and youth on the wait-list seeking mental health and addictions care;

“Whereas the wait times for children and youth seeking mental health and addictions care in the province average three months to 18 months;

“Whereas too many children and youth have died waiting for treatment, and early treatment is more likely to be effective in helping people live full and happy lives;

“Whereas the failure to take action in helping children and youth access mental health and addictions services hurts people, families and Ontario’s communities;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately cap the wait time for children and youth seeking mental health and addictions services to 30 days after these services have been deemed essential, taking all the necessary policy and funding steps to ensure that the minister is able to enforce this cap, and provide children and youth the services they need” when they need and deserve them.

I fully support this petition, sign it and give it to page Pyper to deliver.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Tom Rakocovic: My petition is entitled “No More Waiting for Children and Youth Mental Health Care.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas one in five children and youth in Ontario experience a mental health issue that significantly impacts their lives, and the lives of people around them;

“Whereas there are over 12,000 children and youth on the wait-list seeking mental health and addictions care;

“Whereas the wait times for children and youth seeking mental health and addictions care in the province average three months to 18 months;

“Whereas too many children and youth have died waiting for treatment, and early treatment is more likely to be effective in helping people live full and happy lives;

“Whereas the failure to take action in helping children and youth access mental health and addictions services hurts people, families and Ontario’s communities;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately cap the wait time for children and youth seeking mental health and addictions services to 30 days after these services have been deemed essential, taking all the necessary policy and funding steps to ensure that the minister is able to enforce this cap, and provide children and youth the services they need and deserve.”

I fully support this petition, affix my signature to it and will be giving it to page Martin.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further petitions? I apologize to the member from Thornhill that I missed her in the last rotation.

The member for Thornhill.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas students living in York region attending York University’s Keele campus will be affected by the two-fared system from York Region Transit (YRT) and the TTC; and

“Whereas students will pay \$3.75 with a Presto card or \$4 cash for a ride on the YRT and have to transfer to the subway contracted under the TTC at Pioneer Village station and pay an additional \$3 with a Presto card or \$3.25 cash fare; and

“Whereas many students would have to walk more than 20 minutes to get to some of their classes to avoid paying additional fares;

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

“To remove the two-fared system and allow students who ride the YRT to transfer to the TTC without paying an additional fare, regardless of if or whether or not they use a Presto card.”

I’m very pleased to affix my signature and give it to page Michelle.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Sara Singh: I’d like to present this petition to the House.

“No More Waiting for Children and Youth Mental Health Care.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas one in five children and youth in Ontario experience a mental health issue that significantly impacts their lives, and the lives of people around them;

“Whereas there are over 12,000 children and youth on the wait-list seeking mental health and addictions care;

“Whereas the wait times for children and youth seeking mental health and addictions care in the province average three months to 18 months;

“Whereas too many children and youth have died waiting for treatment, and early treatment is more likely to be effective in helping people live full and happy lives;

“Whereas the failure to take action in helping children and youth access mental health and addictions services hurts people, families and Ontario’s communities;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately cap the wait time for children and youth seeking mental health and addictions services to 30 days after these services have been deemed essential, taking all the necessary policy and funding steps to ensure that the minister is able to enforce this cap, and provide children and youth the services they need and deserve.”

I’m very proud to add my name to this petition and I’m going to send it off with page Shumyle.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Deepak Anand: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government for the people was elected on a mandate to end hallway health care and cut hospital wait times; and

“Whereas for too long Ontario patients, families, doctors and nurses have been frustrated with inefficient and overcrowded hospitals; and

“Whereas hallway health care is a multifaceted problem that requires innovative solutions and a long-term focus; and

“Whereas our government has consulted with health care professionals to develop a plan to end hallway health care, and improve health outcomes and patient satisfaction;

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

“Take the first step in fulfilling this promise by investing \$90 million to create over 640 new beds and provide additional funds to hospitals in advance of flu season, and build 6,000 new long-term beds across the province.”

I fully support this petition, put my signature and give it to page Anika.

CHILD CARE WORKERS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to maintain the provincial Wage Enhancement Grant for registered early childhood educators and child care workers in licensed child care. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the provincial Wage Enhancement Grant provides \$2 per hour in wage support to many registered early childhood educators and child care workers in licensed child care;

“Whereas the provincial Wage Enhancement Grant supports staff recruitment and retention in licensed child care, increases income security among registered early childhood educators and child care workers, and begins to recognize their contributions to Ontario communities;

“Whereas the provincial Wage Enhancement Grant helps close the gender wage gap;

“Whereas the provincial Wage Enhancement Grant helps keep parents’ child care fees from rising;

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

“Maintain the \$2-per-hour provincial Wage Enhancement Grant for registered early childhood educators and child care workers in licensed child care.”

I fully support this petition, affix my name and will give it to page Vanessa to take to the table.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Ian Arthur: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government should end mandatory time-of-use

pricing for residents, farmers and small business electricity consumers, and develop a fairer price structure that meets conservation goals while not punishing people for having farms, businesses and families.

1400

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Arthur has moved private member’s notice of motion number 32. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Ian Arthur: It is an honour to stand here today and bring my first motion to the floor of this Legislature. It’s a motion that goes to the heart of the affordability crisis in Ontario and directly addresses the cost of hydro bills that skyrocketed under the previous Liberal government. Families, farmers and businesses are not unique, and many have electricity needs that do not and cannot conform to the time-of-use pricing structure. The mandatory nature of the program has adversely affected those Ontarians, and my motion today seeks to rectify this situation.

The time-of-use pricing scheme and the corresponding installation of smart meters was intended to encourage conservation and shift electricity usage to periods when there would be less demand pressure on the system, eliminating the need, in theory, for more peak power plants. This did not happen. Instead, we got ever-increasing prices, the Liberal gas plant scandal and an ever-increasing affordability crisis here in Ontario.

Like most Liberal programs, time-of-use and smart metering went woefully over budget. In 2014, the Auditor General found that the government of the day did not provide a cost/benefit analysis to determine if the program was even worth the money. Even worse, the cost of the \$1-billion program went another billion dollars over budget. This cost Ontario taxpayers over 100% more than what the estimate was for it. It drove the cost of hydro up—the opposite of its intent.

From the beginning, this mandatory program was flawed, and time-of-use pricing has not achieved the conservation goals. Even when it was launched, a similar program in California already had underwhelming results.

Conservation is important, and I care very much about energy transformation in Ontario. For those who are in a position to take advantage of time-of-use pricing, it will still be there. That is why this motion does not seek the removal of this program, but rather of its mandatory nature. For those with the means and schedules to change, or those who have already changed their consumption habits, they will still have the ability to do so.

We have already overpaid for the infrastructure. It should remain in place. Ripping out existing electrical infrastructure really doesn’t actually make any sense. For those who cannot change their lives or business hours, there are better ways to achieve conservation goals: programs for energy-efficient retrofits. Grid-level storage has proved to be effective and profitable in other jurisdictions. All over the world, new designs and solutions to grid-level storage are being developed, and we should focus our energy and resources to ensuring these businesses come to Ontario, so we can benefit from both the

outcomes of their labour and also from the economic activity that these companies could provide.

Let's go back to 2013. Back then, an OEB study found that the program had only reduced on-peak consumption by 3% and that it hadn't spurred any conservation at all. Then, in 2014, came another report from the OEB. This one stated, "There has been little or no change to consumer behaviour in response to dynamic pricing and smart meter initiatives.... Ontario's time-of-use pricing model is not adequately achieving its conservation and demand management goals." Another year forward, in 2015—we're getting closer to now—the OEB finally conceded that time-of-use pricing was not meeting its objectives. Skip forward to 2016: An analysis provided for the IESO, the Independent Electricity System Operator, found that non-residential RPP customers—farmers and small businesses, that is—were even less able than residents to switch their usage.

Between 2003 and 2016 under the previous Liberal government, on-peak hydro rates more than quadrupled. Even with these increased costs, consumers and businesses were not able to switch their usage. Conservation did not increase, and usage did not go down. This program simply doesn't work. It's the epitome of Liberal over-regulation that negatively affects Ontarians.

Making this change is not expensive. We just change how we bill folks in Ontario. We don't have to change out any infrastructure. It goes directly to the heart of the affordability crisis in Ontario.

This program has hurt farmers and businesses, and it's time for that to end. It is now 2019. Year after year, we were presented with evidence that the mandatory nature of this program was flawed. But this year, we have a new government and we have a new official opposition, so let's please make 2019 the year that we finally listen to the evidence and change the mandatory nature of the time-of-use pricing scheme in Ontario.

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

Mr. Paul Calandra: Let me just say, before I get into my remarks, that I certainly appreciate the honourable member's passion and commitment to the files, and the energy that he brings to them. I've appreciated the time that we've spent in the House.

Madam Speaker, as you know, since we took office back in June of last year and, really, before that, as the official opposition, the Ontario PC Party has been focusing on energy. It has been focusing on the high cost of energy: the cost that it has meant to our families and the cost that it has meant to our small, medium and large job creators across this province.

There's a whole host of the reasons why we have spent so much time talking about hydro and the cost of energy. We heard it just yesterday, in fact. The Premier talked about how difficult the autism file was. But what has made these files even more difficult is the fact that the Liberal-NDP coalition of the past 15 years had so forgotten how important it was to balance budgets, to keep money in the pockets of hard-working Ontarians, that they almost

bankrupted the province, so that we now have to make even tougher decisions.

When you look at where Ontario was before the Liberal-NDP coalition took power back in 2003, Madam Speaker, we were a jurisdiction that was the leading jurisdiction for manufacturers across this country. We were the engine of the Canadian economy; we've heard it time and time again. What has happened since then? We lost the advantage that we had. We lost the advantage that we had, Madam Speaker. We have seen jobs bleed out of this province.

The member for Brampton was talking the other day about some of the jobs and economic losses that we've had in the manufacturing sector. In a very real way, it was the former head of Chrysler who started to alert us to the emergency of increased hydro prices when he said that because of the cost of hydro, because of the cost of doing business in the province of Ontario, they were looking at other places to invest. We can't have that.

We heard, during the election—all of us, on both sides of the House—how people were trying to decide between heating and eating. It's not just in urban areas that we've seen our prices increase; in some of the rural areas of this province, we have seen quadrupling of their hydro prices: \$1,000 a month to pay for hydro in the winter. It is completely and absolutely unacceptable.

When we took office, we knew that we had to do something about it and we had to move quickly, and that's what we did. The minister and the Premier moved very quickly, and the cabinet moved quickly. We cancelled projects that would have cost Ontario taxpayers and ratepayers even more money. We put that money back into the pockets of Ontario families. We cancelled contracts that would have cost us almost \$1 billion more, which would have seen our rates increase.

The Minister of the Environment worked to eliminate cap-and-trade. Why did we do that? Not only because it puts more money back in the pockets of Ontario families, but it also meant that our local distribution companies and the people who create energy in this province didn't have to pass those costs on to our ratepayers.

So we've looked at it and we said we have to do more, because it's not just about looking at the damage that was done by the Liberal-NDP coalition from 2003 to 2015.

1410

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Calandra: I know it sometimes gets them upset when they hear that, but Madam Speaker, there was a time when there was a minority government. There was a minority government and the NDP had the opportunity to end that coalition, to put the people of Ontario on the right path, and they chose to support their coalition partners in the Liberal Party and keep them in office even longer. Who was paying the price? It's Ontarians who are paying the price. When you look at the voting record of the NDP under the coalition, 98% of the time they voted in favour of bills that were brought forward by the Liberal Party.

Madam Speaker, time-of-use is something that is very frustrating to the people of Ontario. I've talked to many

seniors who said, “I can’t change my life so that I can cook and do my laundry when it is cheapest to do so.” Students, people who work on different shifts, they all come and say that it’s an aggravation and it’s a frustration to them.

They want something done, but Madam Speaker, what you see in this motion brought to the House highlights everything that is wrong with today’s NDP. It highlights everything that is wrong with the opposition. It is not just the responsibility of the opposition to oppose—that’s what makes our system great; I would say it’s one of the best systems in the world because we do have opposition. They are critical of bills. That is their job, and I appreciate that. But it also their job to bring forward solutions and suggestions, and if you can’t do that, then it is not worth our time to even look at it.

The member opposite, I know, has many ideas and suggestions on what we should replace time-of-use with. Why he has not brought that forward to the House to have a real, fulsome debate on where we move forward, I don’t know. I can only think that perhaps the leadership of his party has not wanted him to do that. I know the member has ideas. We served on a committee and he has brought forward a number of other ideas before.

What we have here is a cynical motion where I agree with the emphasis of what the member wants to do, and we are looking at that. But when you look at the hydro file it is very clear that one cannot do one thing without impacting a whole number of other things. That is what the Liberal-NDP coalition of 2003 to 2018 did constantly. They lurched from ideological solution to ideological solution, and in the process they quadrupled rates for hydro. They bankrupted this province and now we’re forced to make some tough decisions, Madam Speaker.

What we’re going to do is put it together, a whole government approach bringing down the cost of hydro. We said we would bring it down by 12%, and we will make that goal. We said we would bring change to Hydro One, and we’ve done that. We said we would put more money back in the pockets of Ontario families, and we’re doing that. We said we would bring back jobs, and we are doing that. For the first time in many years, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. People see hope and prosperity returning to this province, and it will start again with hydro.

But it won’t start piecemeal. So whilst I appreciate what the member has brought forward, I would also encourage the member, if he really wants to make change, to bring solutions forward. Bring us solutions and ideas, because we are here to listen. When we do that, when we work together, it is the people of Ontario who benefit from that.

With that, Madam Speaker, I thank you for your indulgence. I thank the honourable member for starting the discussion, and I anxiously await some of the suggestions that he might have, and his party might have, to actually make some solutions and some positive change in the province.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I’m going to share my time here with my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane. Let me

just say a couple of things before I make the point that I wanted to make.

The New Democratic Party, and Andrea Horwath in the last election, as now, actually have a plan to bring hydro prices down by 30%. A number of those things included getting rid of time-of-use pricing. The Conservative Party, in the last election—what was their plan? None. You ran on no plan to deal with hydro other than the rhetoric that you were going to get rid of the cap-and-trade system, which is not equated to a reduction of our hydro bills.

Nobody in Ontario has had a reduction to their hydroelectricity bills as a result of what you’ve done. You can stand up all you want and chastise the opposition and the member for bringing the motion forward, but we actually have a plan. The plan is clear. You can go to the website. It deals with a number of different items, but on average, it would bring the price of the electricity down about 30%. That would be a real savings in the pockets of the people of Ontario.

The second thing I want to say is that the members get up on the other side and they say, “Oh, the NDP, while in opposition, propped up the Liberals.” I want to point out two things: There was a majority government on the other side of the House then, and they did whatever the heck they wanted, just as the majority government is doing what it wants today. So it didn’t matter a darn what the PC opposition did or what the NDP opposition did; the government was in the majority.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member from Markham–Stouffville, come to order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Here are the facts, guys, and you don’t want to hear it: You voted in favour of the government 52% of the time. That’s the reality. There was a 4% difference on the voting record of the Conservatives and New Democrats when it came to supporting certain initiatives.

For example, we voted for one of your bills yesterday on education. It’s not uncommon for an opposition party to vote in favour of a government bill. Are you saying that we’re propping you up because we voted for your education bill? That’s such a silly argument.

People expect us to come here and, where we can agree, to work together to make things work, and, where we don’t agree, to propose change. That’s what the member is doing. He’s bringing a proposition in order to help people.

Let me get into a bit of a scenario on why this is so important to so many people. I’ll just talk about myself. We have a house, and we have another house out at the lake, out at Kamiskotia. There’s no natural gas there. The house in Timmins is not electrically heated; it’s heated with natural gas. So the cost of my hydro and the cost of the natural gas put together is pretty reasonable in the city of Timmins when you add them both up. But where I live out at Kamiskotia Lake, without burning wood—just burning electricity—I went from about \$200 a month, back in the days before the Liberals took office and started monkeying around with the electricity system and really bugging it up, to where I was paying over \$1,000 a month for the hydro bill out at Kamiskotia lake.

I did like most other people: because I didn't have natural gas, I went out and bought a wood-electric combination furnace. I put it in my house—it cost me some money to put it there—and I burned wood, with electricity as a backup when I wasn't there. My hydro bill last year, with burning wood-electric, was averaging around \$600 to \$700 a month in December, January and February, even if I was there putting wood in the stove.

Finally this year what I've had to do is look at the entire cost. Because there's no fire protection, I had to pay a \$3,200 premium on my insurance bill to insure the house out at the lake. If I don't have a wood stove—which I have to remove now because it's too darned expensive on the insurance side—my insurance goes from \$3,200 to \$1,500. I'm saving \$1,700 a year in insurance costs, less the wood, which is about \$1,000 that I have to pay.

The point that I make is this: People have no options. If you live in northern Ontario and you're not on the natural gas grid, you are either in a situation of having to burn wood, which means your insurance costs are going to be up because they charge you more for a house that burns wood than a house that doesn't burn wood—and you've got to pay for your wood because most people don't have the time to go in the bush and cut all their own wood. You're going to pay anywhere from \$70 to \$100 a cord, depending on where you live, and you normally burn between 12 to 16 cords, depending on the type of unit you have.

Even if you're burning wood, by the time you pay the insurance you're paying more than you would with natural gas. So your only option is either to burn electricity or to burn propane—but the cost of converting to propane is fairly expensive, so in my case I just stayed with hydro.

The point I make is this—and I just want to get into some of the numbers before I pass it on to my colleague. In the winter, in the month of January, about 250 kilowatts per day is what I'm burning with my electric system. That's when I'm there. If you talk about 25- or 30-below-zero kind of weather, I'm burning 250 to 270 kilowatts per day.

Of that, about 150 kilowatts per day is at peak. I have no choice. I can't turn off the thermostat at 1 o'clock in the afternoon when I'm there because there are people living in the building. I'm having to pay peak prices over 12 hours a day in order to heat the building, and I have no choice. And if you live in places like Moosonee, Attawapiskat or Peawanuck, the price of electricity makes my bill look small at \$800 a month.

1420

So I'm saying to you across the way that the member has actually got a motion that would do something to save people money and put money back in the pockets of people, and that is to get rid of the time-of-use pricing, because time-of-use pricing was a failed policy by the Liberal government when they were in power that only drove prices up and made us all pay more for things that we have no choice on. I will support this motion, because it's the right thing to do. Just because the Tories don't have

a plan doesn't mean to say that they shouldn't support a good plan brought forward by the NDP.

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: I would like to thank my colleague the member for Markham–Stouffville for his passionate work on this file—very much so. Our government was elected to clean up the hydro mess left behind by the Liberals and to lower hydro rates for the families and businesses that pay their electricity bills day in and day out. Since we were elected this summer, we have been hard at work. We started by revamping the leadership at Hydro One, cancelling 758 energy contracts and saving taxpayers \$790 million. We immediately started delivering on our promises to put more money back in Ontarians' pockets.

The previous Liberal government decided to trample on the rights of municipalities by forcing their green energy projects into their backyards. Communities all over the province were forced to become home to wasteful projects for power we didn't need. While the Liberal insiders got rich, families and businesses were forced to pay high electricity prices for power we never needed. While the Liberals were claiming their moral high ground, our province was forced to sell the excess electricity at a loss. Essentially, under the Liberals, Ontarians were forced to pay higher prices while other jurisdictions enjoyed buying Ontario's electricity at a discount.

The Liberals were out of touch and didn't understand the struggles of families paying their hydro bills every month. That's why we cancelled these wasteful projects and repealed the Green Energy Act: so that this kind of mismanagement and careless spending never happens again.

Madam Speaker, we're stuck in a mess left behind by the previous government. Well, we've made great progress so far. All of our caucus is proud of the steps we've taken thus far, but it's imperative that we take the time to look at all options for the electricity system and develop a comprehensive strategy for the future.

The Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines and his amazing PA have already shown tremendous leadership on this file, and I have no doubt that he will continue to make the responsible choices that protect the interests of families and businesses across the province. That's why we cannot support this motion in good faith: because it is not a long-term solution. It's a short-term fix, and we all know that they often end up making things worse, and certainly do not fix the situation. This motion does just that. It discusses repeal without any thought being given to replacing the system. That's simply irresponsible.

Madam Speaker, families voted for our government because they were tired of the previous government's choices and the high costs of those disastrous decisions. Almost every decision that the previous government made took more and more money out of taxpayers' pockets. They completely mismanaged the energy file and drove jobs out of this province, forcing people to have to choose between heating and eating.

That's why we cannot accept or support band-aid solutions to long-term problems. Our province needs a strong, thoughtful policy direction that allows our electricity system to heal and recover from the mismanagement that has plagued it for 15 years. That's what our government promised during the election, and that's exactly what we're going to do.

Our government has invested a tremendous amount of time preparing for comprehensive and structural reforms since taking office. We will continue working hard on fundamental reforms to repair our electricity system. We're not going to undermine the great work we have done so far by making short-sighted decisions. That's how the previous government operated. We will not be making the same mistakes.

We promised to reduce energy costs for the great people living and doing business in this province. Supporting this motion would not be a step towards that goal. It would be a regression to a way of the policy-making that has not benefited the families and businesses that pay their bills—

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

Mr. Michael Parsa: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to speak in the House and, today, to support my colleague from Kingston and the Islands regarding his private member's motion to end the use of mandatory time-of-use pricing.

I would just like to start—I think there are a few things we can agree on with the current government. The Liberals made a mess of the hydro system in Ontario. We can agree on that, right? Now, we have different views on how we should fix that. The end of mandatory time-of-use pricing is one small step. I would like to thank the member from Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill for proving our point, because he stated—on which we agree—that we sell hydro to other jurisdictions at a loss, while at the same time we gouge our own businesses, our own farms, our own people with mandatory time-of-use pricing. We sell it at a loss to other jurisdictions, but we gouge our own people.

Again, we're not saying we have to end all time-of-use. If time-of-use works for you, it works. But as a farmer—a former farmer; I'm going to be up front—I milked cows 365 days a year and I couldn't change the schedule because of time-of-use pricing. Now my farm has gone robotic. The young couple went robotic. Again, the cows don't go in the robots depending on what the hydro meter says. Cows are smarter than you think.

On a personal note, I would just like to extend a shout-out to Tabitha and Rob Verhoeven, who now operate my farm, because a part of their barn collapsed due to snow load. So they've had to move the cows out, as have three other dairy farms in my riding. For those out there who say, "Oh, the climate isn't changing," this summer we had no rain, huge forest fires and then rains of four inches at a time. This winter, we have had one of the coldest winters

on record—we usually don't have snow—and we've had more snow than we have ever had. Is the climate totally changing? Maybe not, but it's sure compressing. So when the government claims that one of their claims to fame is that they got rid of cap-and-trade—okay, but they'd better coming up with something to deal with the facts on the ground.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: But they got a carbon tax.

Mr. John Vanthof: They do have a carbon tax.

I'm going to be up front about another thing. There are less complaints about the price of hydro today than there were a year ago in my office. That's because—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: People got used to it.

Mr. John Vanthof: They got used to it, and because right before the election, as you'll recall, the Liberals, who really screwed up hydro, created the Fair Hydro Plan, which borrowed a bunch of money, put it on OPG's books and is now subsidizing the hydro.

What is the Conservatives' answer to that? Well, they're taking it off OPG's books and putting it on the province's books, but we're still subsidizing hydro rates by massive amounts, and this government is tacking it onto the backs of taxpayers as we speak.

We haven't heard a plan. They are saying of our plan, the start of our plan, which is to basically sell hydro where we can and give our own people a break instead of giving people outside this country a break, "Oh no, that's not a plan." Well, it's a better plan than basically using taxpayers' money to subsidize rates. That's what you're doing now. The Conservative government under Doug Ford is toying with the CEO of hydro, he's firing and hiring the board, but he is leaving—to date, the Liberal Fair Hydro Plan is now the Progressive Conservative Premier Ford not-so-fair hydro plan. It's exactly the same thing. You haven't changed anything.

1430

Ending mandatory time-of-use pricing is a small step, but it's a step in the right direction. It benefits Ontarians instead of people out of this province. It benefits people who can't change their practices. People like me who farm, people who heat their houses, little old ladies who are drying their clothes at 2 o'clock in the morning, it would benefit them. Why won't you take this small step with us toward an eventual solution?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Kingston and the Islands has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Ian Arthur: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm a little confused. I'm just going to read here again: "... the government should end mandatory time-of-use pricing for ... electricity consumers, and develop a fairer price structure...."

That sure sounds like ideological rhetoric, eh? Maybe I need to go back and look up what "ideology" is again. I'm sure I could find an answer in the white binders that the members opposite like to carry around.

That is a practical solution to one small part—and I will admit it, it is a small part—of fixing hydro in Ontario, and I do urge the government to support that.

This government has also been responsible for \$130 million in penalties because they interfered with Hydro One. That doesn't sound like putting more money in the pockets of Ontarians; that sounds like you're going to cost them more on hydro.

I would happily come over and help you develop the full plan. I admit this is only a small part of the plan, but this is a motion; this is not a piece of the legislation. It is not as comprehensive as legislation, but it is a motion which is making a recommendation for a small thing that can be done to help consumers in Ontario with the price of hydro.

It would be very easy for the government to say, "That sounds like a good idea. We will adopt that and make it part of our future plan." But that's not what they're doing. They're trying to label this as ideology, and that's not right. I would be very surprised if, in a few months, when we finally—finally, long after the election—have a PC hydro plan, part of that plan wasn't ending mandatory time-of-use.

Why would the government not support this today if they know they are going to pursue this in the future? I'll tell you why. It's because an NDP MPP brought it forward, and that means that this government doesn't get to stand in front of it.

They're playing politics, and that's just not right.

RIGHT TO TIMELY MENTAL
HEALTH AND ADDICTION CARE
FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH ACT, 2019
LOI DE 2019 SUR LE DROIT DES ENFANTS
ET DES JEUNES À DES SOINS
DE SANTÉ MENTALE ET
AU TRAITEMENT DE LA TOXICOMANIE
EN TEMPS OPPORTUN

Ms. Karpoche moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 63, An Act to enact the Right to Timely Mental Health and Addiction Care for Children and Youth Act, 2019 / Projet de loi 63, Loi édictant la Loi de 2019 sur le droit des enfants et des jeunes à des soins de santé mentale et au traitement de toxicomanies en temps opportun.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: As the member of provincial Parliament for Parkdale–High Park and the official opposition critic for mental health and addictions, I am proud to bring forward my bill, Bill 63, the right to timely care act, on behalf of the children and youth of this province.

Before I begin, I want to acknowledge that we have guests who have joined us for the second reading debate. I want to thank them for making the time to be here. We have many in the members' galleries and also a few in the public galleries.

We also have with us a very special guest, Martha McGroarty, who is here in the members' gallery. Martha

has been an inspiration and a force behind Bill 63 and I am honoured that she's here with her family and has allowed me to share her family's experience, which I will be doing later.

Another special guest is Alicia Raimundo, who is a mental health superhero who was there to launch the bill with me and who last year was recognized as one of CAMH's 150 leading Canadians for mental health.

This bill also has the support and endorsement of organizations across Ontario that are on the front lines delivering mental health and addiction support services and advocating on this issue, like the Canadian Mental Health Association Toronto; Children's Mental Health Ontario's youth arm, The New Mentality; the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario; the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation; the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association; the Canadian Federation of Students; the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario; Irwin Elman, who was Ontario's previous provincial advocate for children; Arrabon House; Mental Illness—Do You Know?; and Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority. I am proud they have endorsed this bill.

So, what is the current state of the mental health and addiction services when it comes to children and youth? Right now, there are one in five children and youth, and growing, living with mental health and/or addiction issues that significantly impact their lives and the lives of those around them. Over 12,000 children and youth are on wait-lists to access mental health and addiction services. Children and youth are waiting 18 months or even longer to be able to access the services they need. Suicide claims more young people's lives than almost any other cause. Since 2006, in Ontario, there has been a 72% increase in emergency department visits and a 79% increase in hospitalization for children and youth seeking treatment for mental health and addiction issues. Amongst students, since 2013, there has been a 50% increase in anxiety, a 47% increase in depression and an 86% increase in substance abuse.

Speaker, I have also heard from many of my constituents in Parkdale–High Park, and, actually, people from across Ontario. Here are a few ways they describe the current system of mental health and addictions.

Parsa, a youth, on Twitter said, "The way Ontario treats youth mental health is horrible. As someone who has dealt with these issues, I think it," as in the wait time cap, "is one of the most urgent policies we need to change provincially. It's time the government recognizes our health including mental health as a serious reality."

Another woman, Paula, said, "As a child and youth worker, I see young people struggle with mental health issues without support. This [bill] will hopefully alleviate some of the challenges they face."

In other words, successive governments, both Liberal and Conservative, have failed the children and youth of this province when it comes to mental health and addiction services. So this bill, very simply, aims to cap wait times for children and youth seeking mental health and addiction services at 30 days. This bill says that when a child or

youth reaches out for help, the answer should not be, “Sorry, we’re full.” The answer shouldn’t be, “Your case isn’t serious enough.” The answer should not be, “You have to wait for two years.” Children and youth suffering from mental health and addiction issues need to be connected with the right supports immediately, because they deserve so much better than what is currently in place.

Speaker, let me tell you what happens when children and youth are given anything but the supports that they need in a timely manner.

Martha’s 20-year-old daughter was brought to the emergency department in a mental health crisis. She was released within hours because she wasn’t considered sick enough to be held for assessment or treatment. Within 24 hours, Martha’s daughter was back in the hospital. This time she had returned to seek treatment. She was told that the program she needed was not available and was advised to wait and keep checking a website for intake dates. Martha’s daughter left the hospital with no recovery plan, no follow-up appointment and no resources whatsoever. Three weeks later, Martha’s family lost her to suicide. They believe that if she had received immediate care and support, perhaps the outcome would have been different. Her family has been devastated by the failure of our mental health system, the long wait times and the lack of resources. Martha and her family are here because they don’t want any other family to experience the pain and the loss that they have experienced.

1440

Time is of the utmost essence when a child or youth living with mental illness or addiction reaches out for help. A mental health or addictions emergency must be accorded the same care as a physical emergency. Support and resources must be available when a person in crisis seeks help, because mental health is health. Children’s Mental Health Ontario estimates that in order to guarantee a 30-day-or-less wait time for those accessing services, it would cost the government \$150 million.

Speaker, \$150 million is not a lot of money, especially considering the problem it is addressing. We also have to keep in mind the cost of not implementing a guaranteed short wait time for children and youth. That is much higher. It can even cost the lives of children and youth.

In public health, we have a mantra that holds true for any health issue. It’s simply this: Prevention is better than cure. It’s much more cost-effective to pay a little bit up front and avoid paying a lot more down the road. By ensuring timely access to mental health and addiction services, we are taking an early-intervention approach which will significantly reduce hospitalizations and visits to the emergency department—and we know how much that costs. It also adds to the problem of hallway medicine that we see now.

On top of that, the rate of re-admittance is extraordinarily high. Children and youth experiencing mental health and addiction issues who are admitted to the hospital emergency departments do so an average of three or more times. According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, the rising cost of the child and youth mental

health crisis to our system since 2006 is at over \$220 million.

I know that the people of Ontario get it, because Lyn on Facebook wrote to me and said, “It is so important to help kids overcome their mental health issues quickly, before they escalate into lifelong problems needing lifelong support. The cost of not supporting kids is astronomical—I hope Ontario is willing to pay the much lower cost of delivering help when it can do the most good.”

Ensuring timely access to mental health and addiction services is not only morally the right thing to do; it’s also fiscally the right thing to do. When these issues are addressed earlier in life—that is, during childhood and as a youth—they have greater potential for living the rest of their lives to their fullest.

Before I wrap up my comments, I want to stress one very important thing about ensuring timely access for children and youth. Indigenous children and youth, as well as children and youth living in northern communities, are often hardest hit by the lack of resources. We know that suicide among young people in northern and Indigenous communities is at a much higher rate than the rest of the province. It is absolutely critical that this 30-day wait time cap ensures that the treatment and services will be delivered within Indigenous children and youth’s own communities and in culturally appropriate ways. We cannot have a child or youth be taken out of their communities simply to access a health service. The government has the responsibility to ensure that the capacity and the systems are built within these communities to deliver on this wait time cap.

Finally, I want to remind everybody in this House, especially my colleagues from across the aisle, that when they were in opposition, just less than a year ago, they called for this. Now, we have \$1.9 billion in mental health funding from the federal government, and the provincial government’s commitment to match that—a total of \$3.8 billion at the table. Here is finally an opportunity to address the crisis in children and youth mental health.

The Minister of Health has said, “It’s time to ensure that Ontario’s children and youth no longer have their well-being put at risk due to lengthy wait times and chronic underfunding.” I hope that the minister and the rest of her team, now that you’re in a position of power and able to take action, will do the right thing and vote in favour of this bill.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: I am pleased to rise today to debate Bill 63, which, as you have heard, addresses access to mental health for youth. I want to thank the member from Parkdale–High Park for raising this important issue in the House, and certainly I appreciate the positive intentions that have gone into preparing this bill. Mental health is not a partisan issue and there are certainly many opportunities ahead to work together for the benefit of all Ontarians.

Before I speak to the substance of this bill, I want to offer members some context about the ongoing work

within our government on the mental health and addictions file. As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health charged with particular responsibility in this area, I have been working closely with the minister over the past few months on our commitment to develop a comprehensive mental health and addictions system.

We know that for any system to be effective, we need to learn from those who have experience on the front lines. That's why, over the past few months, both the minister and I have travelled across Ontario to meet with our partners in the mental health and addictions sector. We have heard from people on the front lines, including patients, doctors, psychologists, hospital administrators—you name it. Also, we have been talking to people with lived experience with these issues.

We have conducted consultations in communities across the province and we have heard from Ontarians. We have heard about the barriers to access in many communities. We have heard about the difficulties faced by many individuals transitioning from child and youth mental health, for example, into the adult mental health system. But we have also heard some success stories, which gives us some hope, and we have visited some communities where service providers on both the children and the adult sides of the mental health and addictions system have already come together to help create a continuum of care.

The information that we have gathered through our consultations will help inform our government's plan as we move forward to invest the \$3.8 billion that the member mentioned over the 10 years, to develop and implement a comprehensive and connected mental health and addictions system with a true continuum of care. This is the largest provincial investment in mental health history. We want to make sure that we focus on direct, front-line care, while improving access to mental health and addiction services for all Ontarians.

Our government is committed to an Ontario where patients do not need to be in crisis to get the mental health and addictions treatment that they need when they need it, and there is certainly much more work to be done to get to that point. I look forward to working with all of the members of this House, including the member from Parkdale–High Park, to make that commitment a reality.

Just let me focus my comments now specifically on Bill 63. Obviously we agree with the intent of this bill, which is laudable. We need a system where all Ontarians can access the mental health and addictions treatment they need, when and where they need it. I have some concerns with the way the legislation is currently written, most notably the current ability of our system to meet deadlines as proposed in the legislation. We know that that ability is not yet there. Even using the narrowest possible definition of mental health or addictions service as stated in the legislation could impose a significant burden on existing providers trying to meet a significant demand for services, and we know there are significant demands, as you cited.

I can tell you that during our recent consultation, I didn't come across a single provider who said that they

have excess capacity. Everybody has wait-lists and it's something we need to deal with, but right now they're not able to take on a lot more without us figuring out exactly where we can invest and where we can make the most impact. The last thing that we want, and I'm sure it's true for the members opposite as well, is a situation where a service provider, in an attempt to meet a legislated wait time with a cap, ends up pushing children and youth through the system without appropriately meeting or assessing their specific needs and without the proper standards of care or quality of care that Ontarians expect and deserve and that we so much want to deliver in this important area. I'm afraid there may be a real risk of that with the legislation the way that it is drafted.

1450

But certainly, the aims of the legislation are broadly consistent with what we're doing currently and what is currently under way in the development of our mental health and addictions system. That's why I can say I will be voting in favour of this legislation today at second reading. I want the legislation to get to committee so we can have the comprehensive study and scrutiny about these issues and discuss how it can be improved or how we can work together to make a better bill.

I encourage all of my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation and to continue working with us as we build a comprehensive and connected mental health and addictions system.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: I'm in full support of the member for Parkdale–High Park's bill, the Right to Timely Mental Health and Addiction Care for Children and Youth Act.

Any child or youth struggling with mental health challenges needs help, not just a spot on a long wait-list. Bill 63 will cap the wait times for children and youth seeking out mental health and addictions services to 30 days.

Some 75% of mental health disorders first appear before the age of 25. Early intervention, we know, is key. However, wait times in Ontario are just too long for children and youth to access mental health and addictions services. The average wait times for over 12,000 children and youth on mental health services provision lists range anywhere from three months to one and a half years. The Ford Conservatives slashed \$330 million in mental health and addictions services that Ontarians depended on. It's just going to make our wait times longer.

As everyone knows in here, eating disorders, as one of many mental health issues, are very personal to me. Eating disorders have the highest death rate of all mental illnesses. It is estimated that over one million Canadians struggle with EDs. Almost half of those are right here in Ontario.

Too many people who live with eating problems die on wait-lists, waiting for service. Dr. Blake Woodside said he's tired of going to funerals. He's tired of going to funerals all too often as people wait and wait on wait-lists.

There are devastating economic consequences for eating disorders left untreated. According to NIED, the National Initiative for Eating Disorders, these can include disrupting developmental trajectories that can result in a delay or inability to enter the workforce, years of dependence on social assistance and repeated hospital visits and hospitalizations. They identify four primary costs associated with eating disorders: direct costs to those affected and their caregivers, treatment costs to public health care systems, lost earnings for those with eating disorders and their caregivers, and extended costs in Ontario disability support payments.

For young people with EDs, which are mental health issues—and health, as my member said, is mental health—we have to cut the wait-list. We have to end the wait-list. We need to make drastic changes in order to increase their rate of recovery and reduce the amount of time it would take for them to get back on their feet, thriving in this world.

When we start to consider young people who are racialized, LGBTQ, low-income, deaf, or with a disability, and new immigrants, for example, we can see that they face even more systemic barriers to accessing health care, to accessing mental health care, to accessing eating disorder support. So we have to also address systemic discrimination and make sure that any resources we're giving in the mental health sector are culturally relevant.

Again, I say thank you very much to my member from Parkdale–High Park. You are fantastic. You are outstanding and such a leader and an advocate in your community. It is an honour to work with you and to learn from you. I stand here in full support of your bill.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I'm happy to rise today in support of this bill moved by my colleague from across the aisle and from the riding right next door to mine. The member and I actually had the pleasure of attending Tibetan New Year a few weeks ago, held in my riding.

I have often said that mental health is like a line that runs through everything that government deals with. It is a connecting line through all our ministries. As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Housing, I've had the opportunity to meet with stakeholders from around the province to talk about housing needs. A theme I regularly heard from stakeholders, such as supportive housing providers in my riding, is a linkage between mental health and housing. That linkage exists across so much of what we do as a government.

The importance of addressing mental health issues in this province is especially evident when we talk about our young people. When I talk to young people, access to supports for mental health is top of mind. As I'm sure everybody knows, our government is listening. We are listening to these concerns and working diligently to address them. Those who suffer from or provide support for mental health and addictions have an ally and an advocate in our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and her parliamentary assistant.

Right now, the government is consulting with partners in the mental health and addictions community to identify specific needs. I know that PA Martin has been around the province on behalf of Minister Elliott to hear first-hand from these communities. These consultations are ongoing and will help the government as it moves forward with investing \$3.8 billion over 10 years to develop and implement a comprehensive and connected mental health and addictions treatment system.

For those of us like myself who are a little older than today's young people, having these kinds of conversations about mental health that we used to be uncomfortable with—these conversations are happening today. Many of us grew up with the idea that it's not okay not to be okay, that you should just suck it up or keep it to yourself, that you just need to pull yourself up by the bootstraps and keep on going.

As a society, we have tried to sweep conversations about mental health and addictions under the rug. Due to leaders such as our former finance minister, Michael Wilson—I attended his funeral over the weekend—leaders in our communities have stepped up and said that it's time to have these conversations, conversations that have started to end the stigma that has kept mental health conversations hushed.

Thankfully, we are moving toward a society where we can have those kinds of conversations out in the open and in public. This change has been embraced by members on all sides of this House, and it's a change we should all welcome. That is why I am pleased to support this bill before us today. Unfortunately, it is not a perfect bill, but I applaud the member from Parkdale–High Park for bringing this very important issue forward today.

If this bill is passed, there are two specific issues I hope can be addressed at the committee stage. First is that currently the mental health and addictions sector is not yet prepared to immediately meet the increased demands that would come from a 30-day cap on wait times for most child and youth services. This is especially true if the bill came into effect without corresponding system transformation initiatives, such as training, coaching and other supports required to implement changes in service delivery.

Second, if this bill is passed, it may unintentionally move children and youth through the system too quickly, to meet the 30-day cap, without adequately addressing their specific needs and without providing the best care possible. If that happens, children and youth might be forced to re-enter the system or visit a hospital emergency room.

These concerns notwithstanding, I applaud the goal of the bill, and I'll be voting in favour of it later this afternoon. I am sure that all of us agree on the importance of creating an Ontario where people don't need to be in crisis to get the mental health and addictions treatment they need where they need it, when they need it, and where everyone is fully supported in their journey toward mental wellness.

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

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Speaker, it's an enormous honour to be able to stand here with you today to support this really important bill. I want to thank my colleague, the member from Parkdale–High Park, for putting it forward. It is so absolutely critically important.

I want to pick up on a few of the comments that she was making.

1500

I hope, by now, everybody in this chamber has read Tanya Talaga's important book *All Our Relations: Finding the Path Forward*, or listened to the Massey lectures that she gave in the fall. Her book centres on the plight of Indigenous children in northern Ontario, and the pandemic of mental health and suicide.

The point that she makes, and I think it's something that we all have to take so much to heart, is how it is critical that each and every one of us do whatever we can to end this, because this suicide crisis is actually on us. These kids are suffering from the results of deep, deep histories of colonization and residential schools, of forced adoptions and forced care, of the erasure of identity, of trauma and intergenerational trauma, and of deep, deep, deep poverty.

As the critic for poverty and homelessness, I have been thinking a great deal about the ways that intersexual identities force people into poverty and homelessness, and make it very difficult for people to emerge from that. This is an absolutely critical part of that puzzle, and it's important that we all consider it.

In the fall, my colleague from Kiiwetinoong talked about the suicide of Karlena Kamenawatamin, at 13 years old, from Bearskin Lake. Mental health issues and deep poverty pushed her into ending her life. Everybody in this chamber was silenced, and my colleagues across the aisle were deeply saddened and deeply affected by it.

But those tears and that saddening don't mean a thing, especially when you have power, unless you step up and absolutely do something about it.

I want to quote from Cindy Blackstock, who writes about the chronic lack of mental health services that First Nations and Indigenous kids have experienced. She says that mental health services that are "available for every other kid ... are not available to First Nations kids."

She talks about how, moreover, Indigenous youth in care, where they are overrepresented, have repeatedly called for more programs to promote healthy connections to family and culture, and improved supports to address issues stemming from childhood trauma, youth addictions and turnover in service providers.

The mental health piece of this is so absolutely critically important. As she says, "These are basics a compassionate and rich country such as ours should provide without question, but doesn't."

It is absolutely time that we take this deeply seriously. This is part of the TRC's calls to action. It is, again, incumbent on each and every one of us, and particularly those of us who have power.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I would like to first start off by thanking the member from Parkdale–High Park for bringing forward this issue, and I'd like to thank all the members who have participated and listened to this debate.

I think private members' bills, Thursday afternoons, when we talk about true issues that touch all our hearts, are the best part of this Legislature, because this is something where we all need to work together.

I come from not a really remote riding, but it's fairly remote, all rural. I have gone to a lot of funerals, many First Nation and many non. The hardest part for me, to those here, is when I talk to the parents and deep down I know that, except for the grace of God, that could be me. That reason alone is why I'm standing here.

I have those parents come into my office, and one mother said, "John, you and I both know that in many parts of rural Ontario, and specifically northern Ontario, if you have suicidal thoughts, there are only two open doors. One is the jail and the second is the morgue."

According to stats from the Nipissing DSSAB, there are some parts of the province where, actually, access to mental health services for children is fairly good. According to their stats, in the area they cover, the average is 20 days if you have suicidal thoughts, that you can have access to some type of service. But in the district of Cochrane, in the north part of my riding, if you're a child demonstrating suicidal thoughts, access is 400 days. Four hundred days is more than a lifetime.

When I go to these funerals, specifically First Nations funerals, they often happen in a series, and the community is incredibly on edge, because when one child goes—and I've talked to a couple of chiefs about it. When one child commits suicide, their peer group sees the outpouring of love that one child gets, and they see that that's how you get people's attention, how you get people's love.

It behooves us all to act. I'm glad this isn't really partisan. It behooves us all, whether the bill is exactly right or not, to move this forward and to stop what we know is happening. The worst thing is when we know there's a problem and we bicker and don't act. We don't have time for that. This isn't a partisan issue. Let's get together and act. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Parkdale–High Park has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I'd like to thank the members from Eglinton–Lawrence and Etobicoke–Lakeshore, and my colleagues from Toronto–St. Paul's, Beaches–East York and Timiskaming–Cochrane for their comments.

I am very pleased to hear that the government intends to support this bill. I hear the concerns that you have raised, but you have to understand that the goal of this bill is to create a standard of care. Because right now in mental health and addictions care, especially when it comes to children and youth, there is no standard of care. This is the first step that we take. Once we have taken this step, then we can go on to the next step, which is discussing how we can ensure that this 30-day wait time is delivered properly across the province.

I completely agree with the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore: Yes, it's a multi-pronged approach. We have

to invest in supportive housing. We have to increase rent supplements. We have to actually build affordable housing. We need to provide the wraparound services that children and youth need.

I would also like to draw the members' attention to the report from Children's Mental Health Ontario, where they have outlined very clearly a solution to ensuring that the 30-day guarantee is achieved. They propose things like ensuring access to psychotherapy within 30 days, especially for children and youth early on when their issues are still mild or maybe moderate, so that it doesn't get to the severe or the acute stage; making sure that intensive treatments are available for children and youth and families that experience the most significant mental health issues; and also to make sure that we scale our 24/7 support services for crisis centres to ensure that our children and youth are not ending up in emergency departments where they are not able to support them.

1510

There are solutions out there. Many organizations on the front lines are doing that work, so let's get together and make sure that that happens.

NOAH AND GREGORY'S LAW
(TRANSITION TO ADULT
DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES
AND SUPPORTS), 2019

LOI NOAH ET GREGORY DE 2019
(TRANSITION VERS DES SERVICES
ET SOUTIENS À L'INTENTION
DES ADULTES AYANT UNE DÉFICIENCE
INTELLECTUELLE)

Mrs. Gretzky moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 64, An Act to amend the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008 respecting transition to adult developmental services and supports / Projet de loi 64, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2008 sur les services et soutiens favorisant l'inclusion sociale des personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle en ce qui concerne la transition vers des services et soutiens à l'intention des adultes ayant une telle déficience.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise today, not just to speak on behalf of my constituents in Windsor-West but, frankly, for parents and adults with developmental disabilities across this province. I can say that because I have heard from so many in my own community and from communities represented by everybody here in this Legislature.

For those who aren't familiar—because there may be some members in the House who aren't familiar with what it looks like when someone transitions out of youth services, when they have a developmental disability, into

adult services, and there may be people who are watching this or who may watch it later and aren't familiar with what that transition looks like—I'm going to go through what that transition looks like for families and for people with developmental disabilities, and what this bill, which in short form is entitled "Noah and Gregory's Law," would achieve with the support of the MPPs in the House.

The way the system is currently, if someone is born with a developmental disability, their family member or caregivers can apply for supports and services under the ministry of children and youth. If they are indeed found to be qualified for the services, that child will receive what is called SSAH, or Special Services at Home funding, to help pay for supports and services that they may need, whether that's therapy, whether that's respite for their family members or whatever that child needs that money for. I shouldn't say "whatever that child needs," because there are restrictions, but that's a whole other subject. But this is to be able to support that child, and it's with them until they turn 18. Once they turn 18, they transition out of children and youth services and into adult developmental services.

Now, I say "transition" because they've transitioned from age 17 to age 18, but the fact of the matter is, they don't actually transition; their supports and their services do not transition with them. What happens currently is, as soon as someone turns 18, they are completely cut off of any supports and services that they were receiving under the ministry of children and youth. They have to apply for what's called Passport funding. One of the most shameful things about it is that they have to prove they still have a developmental disability, because the way the law is written now, and the way things are done now and under the previous government, the Liberal government, was that apparently at 18, suddenly, magically, someone's developmental disability disappears—I'm sure that there are many parents who wish that was the case for their children who have severe developmental disabilities—and then they go on a wait-list.

Once they make it through the application process, which is a very invasive, very intrusive, very personal process that the average person would never go through and have to respond to some of the questions that these families are asked—it's very intense. There are families who choose not to go through with the application process because it is so upsetting and draining for them.

But once they go through the process and it is deemed that their adult child still has a developmental disability, they go through assessment and their needs are assessed. They then get approved for Passport funding and go on a wait-list. The average wait is four to five years. Although, I do want to point out to everybody in the Legislature today that I had a mother reach out to me and tell me that her child has been on that list for 16 years—16 years since they were cut off from their supports and services as a child, and they're waiting for their adult supports to catch up with them.

On top of that, they can get put on a wait-list for supportive housing. That list is about 23 to 24 years long—23

to 24 years long—and they can't apply for that until they're 18. Basically, these now adults with developmental disabilities spend their lives on wait-lists waiting for supports, and it shouldn't be that way. Frankly, it's inhumane. It has been allowed to happen under the previous Liberal government, for that wait-list to grow. The current Conservative government has not uttered a word. We've talked a lot about the under-18 crowd. We've talked a lot about children, specifically with autism. But there has been no discussion about the wait-lists for adults when it comes to Passport funding, and it's long overdue for us to have that discussion.

So the Noah and Gregory's Law would bridge that gap. What it could do is, as someone ages out of their support—children and youth, once they turn 18—the funding that they were already receiving, the funding and the supports that they were getting through the ministry of children and youth, through SSAH, would follow them. They would continue to get it while they go through the application process for Passport, while they sit and wait for Passport funding to actually begin. There would no longer be a four- or five-year gap where they're not receiving any supports or services at all.

The reason that I brought the bill forward, obviously, was to end this unfair gap. Frankly, age discrimination is what it is, because they're saying that up until 17 years old, you are worthy of supports and services, but once you're 18, you can go for a while without having any supports and services. What it also doesn't recognize is that often, for somebody with a developmental disability, their needs actually increase as they get older. The needs of their families and caregivers increase, because not only is that child aging; so are the parents, and they're left without any type of funding or support to be able to help them support their child.

The reason that I called the bill "Noah and Gregory's Law" is because of two incredible young men I had the honour, frankly, of meeting—it was a gift, actually. It was a gift that I got to meet these two gentlemen. Both of them have severe autism. I want to point out that although the bill was named after two young men with severe autism, we need to recognize that there are many, many developmental disabilities, not just autism. There's cerebral palsy. There's fetal alcohol syndrome. There's Down syndrome. There are numerous developmental disabilities, and every single one of those people are unique individuals with unique needs, and what they need is the funding and supports that they were getting as children to follow them through into adulthood, and to make sure that that funding and support actually meet their needs as their needs change.

Unfortunately, Noah and Gregory couldn't be here. Their moms couldn't bring them. It's quite a trip from Windsor all the way up this way. It's even more difficult when you have a child who has special needs. They were prepared to come when I was supposed to debate this bill back in December, but the government ended the Legislature a week early. So now that we've rescheduled, we've come back and I can debate the bill, these parents

were not able to bring their children. In fact, Noah just went through some surgery, so he needs to be at home recovering.

I'm going to start with a letter from Michelle, Noah's mom. I'm going to try to get through both of these without crying; I cannot make you any promises.

1520

This is what Michelle wrote about her son Noah: "When my sweet Noah turned 18, it was one of the hardest days emotionally. I knew life would not be the same for him.

"Several weeks prior to his 18th birthday, all the agencies that Noah received services from sent FYI letters in the mail notifying us that his file will be closed on his birthday and services will cease. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services sent four letters to be exact.

"These letters offered no suggestions of services when he turned 18. I cried each time I opened one of these letters.

"On the eve of his 18th birthday, I couldn't sleep and was still awake at midnight. At 12:01 ... I went to check on him, sitting on his bed and watching him sleep. All the time wondering if his special needs would disappear like dust in the wind since he turned 18 and was cut off from every service and support that I advocated with relentless perseverance for in the past." I do need to point out that Michelle has advocated for a very long time. "Knowing that this was not the case, I became extremely emotional.

"As for my son, his needs magnified as he became older. I was extremely frightened, I had nowhere to turn. There was no agency or coordinator to call if Noah went into crisis, all his services and supports were gone.

"I was starting from square one of having to reapply, re-justify for services and supports that my son had since his diagnosis. I was informed that the wait-lists were extremely long and the application process was overwhelming.

"On his birthday, there was no celebration, no cake and no elation. There was only tears, feeling of complete fear, isolation and anxiety. I was in a fog, I couldn't fathom how my son (who was diagnosed on the severe side of the spectrum) lost every service at 18 without any thought given by the MCSS that he cannot go without services.

"Having a special-needs child turn 18 and cut off from services takes an emotional and physical toll on families that are already stressed and tapped out mentally and physically due to the daily needs of their special-needs child."

With the last minute and a half, I'm going to read the letter from Mary Beth. This is about her son Gregory.

"My name is Mary Beth and my son Gregory has severe autism.

"Gregory is incontinent, cannot speak or communicate well.

"Gregory suffers from nocturnal seizures, food aversions and self-abusive behaviours.

"My son picks his finger and toe nails off until they bleed, he picks his skin until it bleeds, and he hits himself on his legs and sometimes punches himself in the head.

“Gregory sometimes has meltdowns making going anywhere, even for groceries a challenge.

“But, Gregory is also a loving human being, who brings joy to all that meet him. He loves to paint, loves to attend powwows, loves to watch the Wiggles and he loves to laugh.

“His favourite food is potato chips, he loves his chips.

“I am a 53-year-old single mom. I work full-time and I am a proud Ontarian however, raising a child like Gregory has taken its toll on me financially, mentally, physically and emotionally.

“My son deserves a life where he can have supports in place to help him participate within his community, and I require help.

“My son is the light of my life, and he also requires 24/7 care by me. Gregory my beautiful vulnerable son turned 18 years old in November.”

Madam Speaker, I see I'm out of time. I will finish Mary Beth's letter in my wrap-up.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member for Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: We're speaking today on An Act to amend the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008 respecting transition to adult developmental services and supports.

I think this is a lot of what we do in our constituency offices. On one hand, it's challenging; on the other hand, it's interesting. But you really get to know some of the people in your communities who have challenging family situations. We all wish we could do more, of course. Hopefully, by the end of this term, we're going to say that we've moved forward. We're not going to solve all the problems in our constituency offices; we're not going to solve all the problems in our ridings; but we can certainly make things better.

I want to focus a little bit on the multi-year planning that we hope will improve the planning process by establishing a program-management structure.

We want to commit to giving adults with developmental disabilities and their families the support they need to fully participate in their communities at levels that they and their families are most comfortable with. That's very, very important.

The ministry funds a range of residential programs, as well as support staff, for adults with developmental disabilities, including supported group living for three or more people receiving residential supports and services in a group living environment. Group homes also include specialized residences for individuals who have additional challenges, including mental health issues and persistent, high-risk behaviours; as well as intensive-support residences in which one or two persons with a developmental disability who require intensive staff supports reside; and also, supported independent living where one or more persons living independently of their family receive staff support as needed; and host family residences where a person resides with a family that provides care, support and supervision in exchange for remuneration. It's sort of

like when we call the foster system for younger children. The person or people receiving supports are not biological members of the host family.

We know that multi-year planning will improve and create a system where we foster the development and expansion of innovative residential options, utilize data to inform decisions over multiple years and encourage collaboration among the ministry, service providers and ministry partners. The ministry, of course, supports adults with developmental disabilities accessing a range of person-centred, affordable housing and support arrangements to meet their needs and for people to feel empowered to live as independently as possible and flourish in a community of their choice.

Work is presently under way, Madam Speaker, to shift internal systems and processes to promote housing choice and non-MCCSS funded options. We are also working to advance an individualized approach to housing arrangements, to leverage partners and community resources to increase the supply of a range of affordable and supportive housing options, and to collaborate with key system and sector stakeholders to expand awareness about the need to include housing for people with developmental disabilities in their planning and projects. That is all, of course, very important.

I just want to highlight that in my riding—and I think it's getting better known across the GTA and the province—we have what's called the Reena organization. They provide employment opportunities and training. They provide residences for those people in our communities who need extra help due to developmental disabilities.

I'm just reading a little bit from their website: Reena is “ready to live, work and play in the community.” It is, of course, a non-profit. It creates safe, independent and community-based housing options, programs and services to individuals who need them. They have a special program, Madam Speaker, called residential respite, where people can get temporary support and move in on a temporary basis. Perhaps their host family or their biological family is going on a trip or has an emergency or something going on and they need some extra support.

I really want to thank Reena for all they do for the community, thank the residents of Thornhill for supporting Reena, and I want to thank everybody in all of our communities who help those who struggle with some challenges.

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

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to rise, first of all, to just acknowledge my colleague from Windsor West. Thank you so very much for putting this forward. As the critic for disabilities, it's with a heavy heart that we acknowledge some of these things about our society, that we think is so modern and so well-functioning. Then we actually look at how some of our neighbours are treated, and it shocks us. It shocks us to realize that when somebody turns 18 years old, they can lose their support for funding.

I want to look right at the camera and I want to acknowledge moms, like Michelle and Mary Beth, and

parents all over this province and guardians all over this province who have held up the arrangement for too long while these wait-lists have persisted. I want to acknowledge you and I want to thank you. I want to hope that after today, thanks to my colleague, your suffering will one day be over, because it's not right to have 40,000 people waiting for Passport funding.

Citizens of our province: Think about what the veterans in this country fought for—the first mass disability movement—who came back from Europe after fighting the rise of hate. What did they fight for? They fought for a society that was just, where everybody would have an equal opportunity to be their fullest selves. They populated the disability-ranked hospitals. We have let that legacy drop; let's be honest about that. That's what my colleague is telling us through the story of Noah and Gregory. We have let that legacy drop.

1530

In this sitting of the Parliament, as we fight over so many issues, let's take this opportunity to pick up that torch from our grandmothers and grandfathers and say, "Never again; it's done." Ontario has enough wealth to be able to make sure that the most vulnerable citizens among us have a life they can be proud of. It will start with Passport funding, but as others have mentioned, I hope it continues with a focus on housing. I hope it continues with a focus on wraparound services. And I hope we can think about the words of Stephen Hawking, one of my mentors, recently deceased, who said, "Look up at the stars and not down at your feet."

When we see people in our communities suffering like this, let it not take this long for us, as a community of legislators, to rise up and say, "We demand better. You deserve better."

Thank you so much, colleague, for putting this forward. Let's get this done.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: I'm pleased to be able to stand this afternoon and speak in support of Bill 64, Noah and Gregory's Law.

At the outset, it's important to note that the government is committed, absolutely committed, to providing supports for families with developmental disabilities. Part of the proposed legislation, Speaker, focuses on the Passport Program, where individuals over the age of 18 years who have completed an assessment at the Developmental Services Ontario office and are approved for Passport may receive direct funding to develop their own support arrangements and hire their own support workers and service providers.

A standard eligibility and application process is an important step towards reducing any potential inconsistencies in the system so that the resources are directed to the people with the greatest need—a recurring theme, an important recurring theme. The proposed legislation before us this afternoon attempts to address this issue, as it should.

Our government understands that transitional planning is important, which is why the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services works with the Ministry of Education to establish processes that support integrated transitional planning. Young people with developmental disabilities need proper preparation for adulthood.

As it relates to the Passport Program, Bill 64, if implemented, will require the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, at least six months before a person receiving a children's developmental service turns 18 years old, to proactively engage with that person to aid in the transition, an important feature of the bill.

Speaker, I'm sharing my time with another member of my caucus, so I'm going to wrap up now. We're committed as a government to working with stakeholders, including those in the public and private sectors in particular, to deliver wraparound supports that have a meaningful impact for Ontario families. We'll continue to work closely with those partners, the sector and the people we serve to improve the developmental services system and deliver real results for the people of Ontario. They deserve no less.

I look forward, when the time comes to vote, to supporting this particular bill and having it go forward. Thank you.

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

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I rise to support Noah and Gregory's Law. When I think about all of the programs offered by this province, I see potentially valuable and often life-saving services and supports for Ontarians who need them. But I also know there are many programs that need to be redesigned so they can focus on the experience of the people who receive them. Too many people in Ontario must wait for services they are entitled to, due to complicated rules, long processing times and unnecessary bureaucracies, and it is the people who need these services who suffer.

I can think of no better example of the need for better policy than the transition from children and youth developmental services to adult developmental services. This is one of the biggest issues facing Ontarians with developmental disabilities, and their families. When a young person is 17, they are able to apply for access to government services and supports for children and youth, but once they turn 18, the same person is then required to move to a new program with its own application process, rules and wait-list. Sometimes services can be disrupted for years.

When I learned about this problem from my constituents, I thought, "Something has to be done." I applaud the member from Windsor West for putting this private member's bill forward. This is exactly the kind of problem-solving the people of this province sent us here to do.

This bill puts the onus on the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to inform individuals about the transition to adult support. Instead of layering new rules, forms and wait times onto individuals and their

families, the ministry should also be proactive and helpful as individuals make important decisions about the services and supports that meet their needs.

One less major source of worry and stress for their families, and no more unnecessary waiting and delays: We need these proposed changes. They will help us improve services for people with developmental disabilities. They are the kinds of proposals that the people in our communities want to see: policies that make sense and services that are sensitive to the people who receive them. I urge all members of this House to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? I recognize the member for Peterborough–Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I said at lunch, there's another name you can refer to my riding as, as well.

Speaker, I believe we all ran for the same reasons. We're all here in this chamber because we want to make a difference. We want to make life easier for the people of Ontario. I recognize that this private member's bill that is being brought forward is introduced in the spirit of trying to improve the situation for a group of people here in Ontario.

We are taking action. We have a responsible plan. Our government has a responsible plan that will deliver results for people as they transition into adulthood. This bill gives us another opportunity to listen to the needs of the community and continue the work that the Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services has started.

Minister MacLeod has recognized that it's not a silo that her ministry is in. It's not just an issue that is restricted to her ministry. She has taken that leadership opportunity to reach out and have a multi-ministerial approach. She is including the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and the Ministry of Education so that, as a government, we can respond more effectively to the needs of these individuals.

Speaker, we are funding approximately 350 agencies right now in Ontario, specifically in the developmental services sector. We are providing more than \$2.3 billion in annual funding for these services. I introduced Bill 53, declaring March 27 a special hockey day in Canada, because I was inspired by not only the people who work in the developmental services sector, but more importantly because I was inspired by the individuals that they actually support.

I'm here to make a difference, and I think that this bill starts that. It gives us the opportunity to make a difference, and because of that, I will be supporting it. It opens up another avenue for us to have discussions to make a real difference in the lives of people in Ontario.

Speaker, let me tell you a quick story about somebody in my riding: Bruce. Bruce is roughly my age, and he knows everybody in my riding, far more people than I do. I have known his family for about a decade now. His parents, Jim and Sharon, are good friends of mine. They're roughly the same age as my parents. They came to see me about Bruce shortly after I was elected. They have been

helping him since he moved out on his own almost two decades ago. Bruce hasn't been receiving a great deal of support from the Ontario government, though. They were looking for a way to ensure that he could continue with his independence, because they recognize that they're in their seventies now and they're not going to be able to continue that level of support for him. Their needs are going to come to the forefront and they're not going to have the financial ability to support him.

1540

There are a number of us in our constituency offices who have had the very same stories—families like Bruce, Jim and Sharon—where they've come in and they've asked for help. We need to move this bill forward because it's there to help those individuals. It's there to make that difference.

In my constituency office—I will talk a little bit about it—we have somebody we hired specifically because she's an expert in this. Andrea is someone who inspires me on a daily basis. She faces so many challenges that none of us would ever know. She makes us better. We can serve the people better because Andrea gives us that ability.

This bill gives us the opportunity, then, to open up that discussion so that all of us have the ability to serve our constituents better, to make life easier for those people in Ontario we can help.

I will be supporting this bill wholeheartedly.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: I'm very proud to rise here in the House today to speak in support of our member from Windsor West's bill, Bill 64, Noah and Gregory's Law. I think it is a phenomenal bill. I'd like to start off by just thanking you so much for bringing this forward.

As an individual who has a sister with a developmental disability, I have been an advocate because of the experiences that we've had as a family. I know that this has been something that families and people across this province have been asking for for decades. They have been waiting and languishing on wait-lists, and so it's great to see that there is something tangible being put forward that will help address the wait that these young people are experiencing.

I'll start off by just sharing a little bit about my younger sister, Gurvir. She is now 27. When she graduated from high school at 21, every single one of the supports that she had were taken away from her. She graduated being part of a co-op program in high school, having hope of finding a job, of maybe attending post-secondary education, just like so many of us do when we attend and graduate from high school.

As a family, we found out that at 18, her supports were going to be stopped. She was added to a wait-list. We were told that she would be grandfathered in, only to find out later that she wasn't. Our family had to pay, out of pocket, \$2,500 in order to have somebody with Down syndrome, a lifelong disability, be reassessed to have their supports and services reinstated. We waited. Just before her 25th birthday was when we found out that she was going to finally get her Passport funding.

It's unfortunate that people in this province with disabilities have to wait and wait and continue to beg and plead with the governments of the day to ensure that they get the services and supports that they need. We have a responsibility here, and I am very, very happy to hear that the government will be supporting an important piece of legislation like this. I'd like to thank you for doing that. Oftentimes, we hear that we aren't presenting solutions to the government. I think this is an example of a very good solution. I'm very thankful that you are receptive to the idea and will be supporting us.

But we need to understand that the system as a whole is broken. While this will help us achieve access for many individuals, we need to also understand that they need supports in the community and that we do not need to make them jump through hoops in order to prove that they still have a developmental disability that they were born with 18 years later. We need to understand that parents—their primary caregivers, in most instances—are also aging and that their supports are not there, so how are they to take care of their also aging children as they age and need supports and aren't able to access them?

It's unfortunate that we continue to understand that this is a reality. This is not a surprise. There was a select committee that looked into this and had findings and made recommendations that were not implemented. We now have the opportunity to make those changes and understand that we can make sure that people in this province with developmental disabilities get the supports and services they need.

I thank you again. I urge all members in this House to learn more about the supports and services that are needed for people with disabilities here in our province, and understand that autism is one disability and there are many others. We need to ensure that all people with disabilities are included and supported throughout our province.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: My colleague talked about the parents of Noah and Gregory not being able to be here today. It's not easy to get to Queen's Park. It's not easy to take a day off work or take time to reach out to your local elected officials. But you know, Madam Speaker, parents are standing up and fighting for their children. I hope that when we talk about this bill today, we will realize that these parents are fighting for their children, their adult children. I hope, when we talk about this bill today, we realize that these parents are fighting and they will continue to fight. I hope we realize that real human lives are greatly affected by the decisions—and I want everybody to listen to this—the decisions that we make here today. We have a responsibility to make those right decisions, Madam Speaker.

So what does the bill do? The bill fixes a gap that exists between services for those with developmental disabilities before age 18 and after. Right now, when a constituent needs services, they must apply before the person turns 18 and hope that the application will go through and kick in after they are 18, but it doesn't necessarily happen. That's

years without supports that allow people to take part in community classes and recreational programs, hire support workers or create their own life plans. Just saying that out loud, it's obvious there's a real problem here.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Madam Speaker, I can't hear myself talk. It's unfortunate that they're not paying attention.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the clock. I apologize to the member. I am unable to hear the member due to all of the side conversations. I would invite all members to please be respectful. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I would like to applaud the member from Windsor West for identifying this problem and fighting on behalf of Noah and Gregory and their parents, those across this province who have fallen into this gap, and those heading in that direction.

I want to finish, because I'm not going to have enough time to finish my whole speech, with an article that was on W5 that talked about the services that someone had up until he was 18—his name was Deane. The parents had a surround group that took care of him until he got to 18. Do you know what happened once he became 18? Those services were gone. It fell to the responsibility of just the parents. Do you know the biggest concern of parents that have this happen to them, when they can't get housing and they can't get the services they deserve? Do you know what they worry about? "What's going to happen to him when I get too old to take care of him? What's going to happen to him if I pass away? And is he going to end up in some home in front of a TV, maybe with a support worker or maybe not, for the rest of his life?"

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Windsor West has two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Because I only have two minutes, I'm not going to be able to finish Mary Beth's letter. I apologize, Mary Beth; you can send me an angry text, and then we'll talk about it.

The reason I'm not going to finish the letter is because it's really important for me to just recognize that, on the record this morning, when I asked my question about if this government will support my bill, the minister of community and social services—not just to support it in second reading, but make sure it gets into committee and gets through the committee process; that you don't let this bill die in committee, but that you get it through the committee process, get it back in this House for third reading and get it passed. Get it passed so these families and these individuals with developmental disabilities get the supports and services they need. Don't play games with these people's lives. The minister's answer was that, yes, they support it, so I want that on the record. That's very important.

I talked in my two minutes about how we age and we need supports. I've aged and my support is that I now have reading glasses that I have to put on to read these names. I want to recognize some fierce, fierce parents that I've had the opportunity to get to know. Most of them are in Windsor but there are some from across the province. I want to point out that although they're fierce and although they're strong, and though they advocate hard for their children and they work hard every day, they're tired. They're financially, emotionally, mentally tapped out, and they need us to make it right for them, to help them.

So I want to recognize, obviously, Mary Beth and Michelle, whose sons the bill was named after. I also want to recognize Sherri Taylor; April Paré; Jennifer Lapointe; Shirley Knight-Shank; Dale King-Lee, who is actually a grandmother taking care of her grandson with a developmental disability; Sharon Gabison; Jennifer Hennin—there are many, many more, especially across this province.

I have to give a special shout-out to my buddy Michau, who I know is watching this as well.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

HYDRO RATES

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We will deal first with ballot item number 43, standing in the name of Mr. Arthur.

Mr. Arthur has moved private member's notice of motion number 32. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

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

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will deal with this vote after we have finished the other business.

RIGHT TO TIMELY MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION CARE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH ACT, 2019 LOI DE 2019 SUR LE DROIT DES ENFANTS ET DES JEUNES À DES SOINS DE SANTÉ MENTALE ET AU TRAITEMENT DE LA TOXICOMANIE EN TEMPS OPPORTUN

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Ms. Karpoche has moved second reading of Bill 63, An Act to enact the Right to Timely Mental Health and Addiction Care for Children and Youth Act, 2019. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

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

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will deal with this vote after we have finished the other business.

NOAH AND GREGORY'S LAW (TRANSITION TO ADULT DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES AND SUPPORTS), 2019

LOI NOAH ET GREGORY DE 2019 (TRANSITION VERS DES SERVICES ET SOUTIENS À L'INTENTION DES ADULTES AYANT UNE DÉFICIENCE INTELLECTUELLE)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mrs. Gretzky has moved second reading of Bill 64, An Act to amend the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008 respecting transition to adult developmental services and supports. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no—not clearly, but I heard a no.

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

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

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1552 to 1557.

HYDRO RATES

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Members, please take your seats.

Mr. Arthur has moved private member's notice of motion number 32. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Andrew, Jill	Glover, Chris	Natyshak, Taras
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Rakocevic, Tom
Arthur, Ian	Hassan, Faisal	Sattler, Peggy
Bell, Jessica	Hatfield, Percy	Singh, Sara
Berns-McGown, Rima	Karpoche, Bhutia	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Bisson, Gilles	Kernaghan, Terence	Stiles, Marit
Burch, Jeff	Mantha, Michael	Vanhof, John
Fife, Catherine	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	Yarde, Kevin
Gates, Wayne	Morrison, Suze	

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Anand, Deepak	Hardeman, Ernie	Parsa, Michael
Baber, Roman	Hogarth, Christine	Pettapiece, Randy
Babikian, Aris	Jones, Sylvia	Phillips, Rod
Bailey, Robert	Kanapathi, Logan	Rasheed, Kaled
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Ke, Vincent	Rickford, Greg
Bouma, Will	Khanjin, Andrea	Romano, Ross
Calandra, Paul	Kramp, Daryl	Sabawy, Sheref
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kusendova, Natalia	Sandhu, Amarjot
Cho, Stan	Lecce, Stephen	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Coe, Lorne	Martin, Robin	Scott, Laurie
Crawford, Stephen	Martow, Gila	Smith, Dave
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McKenna, Jane	Surma, Kinga
Downey, Doug	Miller, Norman	Tangri, Nina
Dunlop, Jill	Mulroney, Caroline	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Fee, Amy	Nicholls, Rick	Thompson, Lisa M.

Fullerton, Merrilee
Ghamari, Goldie
Gill, Parm

Oosterhoff, Sam
Pang, Billy
Park, Lindsey

Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Wai, Daisy
Walker, Bill

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 26; the nays are 54.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We will now open the doors for 30 seconds to allow members to come or go.

RIGHT TO TIMELY MENTAL
HEALTH AND ADDICTION CARE
FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH ACT, 2019
LOI DE 2019 SUR LE DROIT DES ENFANTS
ET DES JEUNES À DES SOINS
DE SANTÉ MENTALE ET
AU TRAITEMENT DE LA TOXICOMANIE
EN TEMPS OPPORTUN

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Ms. Karpoche has moved second reading of Bill 63, An Act to enact the Right to Timely Mental Health and Addiction Care for Children and Youth Act, 2018. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Glover, Chris	Pang, Billy
Andrew, Jill	Gretzky, Lisa	Park, Lindsey
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Parsa, Michael
Arthur, Ian	Hassan, Faisal	Pettapiece, Randy
Baber, Roman	Hatfield, Percy	Phillips, Rod
Babikian, Aris	Hogarth, Christine	Rakocevic, Tom
Bailey, Robert	Hunter, Mitzie	Rasheed, Kaleed
Bell, Jessica	Jones, Sylvia	Rickford, Greg
Berns-McGown, Rima	Kanapathi, Logan	Romano, Ross
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Karpoche, Bhutula	Sabawy, Sheref
Bisson, Gilles	Ke, Vincent	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bouma, Will	Kernaghan, Terence	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Burch, Jeff	Khanjin, Andrea	Sattler, Peggy
Calandra, Paul	Kramp, Daryl	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kusendova, Natalia	Singh, Sara
Cho, Stan	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	Mantha, Michael	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Crawford, Stephen	Martin, Robin	Stiles, Marit
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Martow, Gila	Surma, Kinga
Downey, Doug	McKenna, Jane	Tangri, Nina
Dunlop, Jill	Miller, Norman	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Fee, Amy	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fife, Catherine	Morrison, Suze	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fullerton, Merrilee	Mulroney, Caroline	Vanthof, John
Gates, Wayne	Natyshak, Taras	Wai, Daisy
Ghamari, Goldie	Nicholls, Rick	Walker, Bill
Gill, Parm	Oosterhoff, Sam	Yarde, Kevin

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 81; the nays are 0.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Which committee?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: General government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is the majority in favour of the bill being referred to the Standing Committee on General Government? Okay.

We will now open the doors again for 30 seconds to allow members to come or go.

NOAH AND GREGORY'S LAW
(TRANSITION TO ADULT
DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES
AND SUPPORTS), 2019

LOI NOAH ET GREGORY DE 2019
(TRANSITION VERS DES SERVICES
ET SOUTIENS À L'INTENTION
DES ADULTES AYANT UNE DÉFICIENCE
INTELLECTUELLE)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mrs. Gretzky has moved second reading of Bill 64, An Act to amend the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008, respecting transition to adult developmental services and supports. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Glover, Chris	Pang, Billy
Andrew, Jill	Gretzky, Lisa	Park, Lindsey
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Parsa, Michael
Arthur, Ian	Hassan, Faisal	Pettapiece, Randy
Baber, Roman	Hatfield, Percy	Phillips, Rod
Babikian, Aris	Hogarth, Christine	Rakocevic, Tom
Bailey, Robert	Hunter, Mitzie	Rasheed, Kaleed
Bell, Jessica	Jones, Sylvia	Rickford, Greg
Berns-McGown, Rima	Kanapathi, Logan	Romano, Ross
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Karpoche, Bhutula	Sabawy, Sheref
Bisson, Gilles	Ke, Vincent	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bouma, Will	Kernaghan, Terence	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Burch, Jeff	Khanjin, Andrea	Sattler, Peggy
Calandra, Paul	Kramp, Daryl	Scott, Laurie
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kusendova, Natalia	Singh, Sara
Cho, Stan	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	Mantha, Michael	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Crawford, Stephen	Martin, Robin	Stiles, Marit
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Martow, Gila	Surma, Kinga
Downey, Doug	McKenna, Jane	Tangri, Nina
Dunlop, Jill	Miller, Norman	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Fee, Amy	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fife, Catherine	Morrison, Suze	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fullerton, Merrilee	Mulroney, Caroline	Vanthof, John
Gates, Wayne	Natyshak, Taras	Wai, Daisy
Ghamari, Goldie	Nicholls, Rick	Walker, Bill
Gill, Parm	Oosterhoff, Sam	Yarde, Kevin

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 81; the nays are 0.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Which committee, please?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'd like it referred to regulations and private bills, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is the majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills? Agreed.

VISITOR

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): It is my privilege to welcome to the Legislature Jean-Marc Lalonde, a former member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

RESTORING ONTARIO'S COMPETITIVENESS ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 VISANT À RÉTABLIR LA COMPÉTITIVITÉ DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 20, 2019, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 66, An Act to restore Ontario's competitiveness by amending or repealing certain Acts / Projet de loi 66, Loi visant à rétablir la compétitivité de l'Ontario en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order, please. A reminder to all members that we have to be able to hear the proceedings. Please exit quietly if you are exiting.

Questions and comments? I recognize the member for Timmins.

1610

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, Madam Speaker, I just wanted to congratulate our member for what was, I thought, a really well-thought-out and well-put-together speech in regard to this bill. I think that he covered off the important parts of this whole thing. He tended to stick pretty well almost to schedule 10 of the bill, I think for good reason, because even though the government has made some comments about, "Oh, we're going to get rid of it," one never knows until it actually happens, and what is in schedule 10 is a real problem.

The government has done a number of things in this bill, some of which are pretty questionable. For example, where I come from, in the mining business, in forestry and paper companies etc., the government is eliminating the toxic chemicals act. That is a problem. There are toxic chemicals in industries such as I represent, and our

companies are pretty darned good when it comes to trying to handle those things, but to weaken the provisions in the toxic chemical act—I should have said "weakened provisions"—I don't think is a step in the right direction.

The government has done a number of things, especially around the whole water-handling issue. We all know what happened in Walkerton. We had a number of people die. A dozen people died as a result of E. coli in Walkerton. We had thousands of people get sick. The government recognized at the time that there needed to be some form of regulation to tie up what happened in places like Walkerton so they didn't repeat themselves in other communities.

So for the government across the way to say, "Oh, getting rid of red tape is the be-all and end-all solution to everything"—there's a reason why we have regulation. Regulations are borne out of the experiences of what's happened before. Where there's been a real big problem, governments tend to come back and create regulation in order to make sure that we don't have the same thing happen again, putting people's lives at risk or making the situation even worse.

I want to commend the member for the comments he made in his speech.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Calandra: I was actually in the House yesterday when I heard the member's comments. Of course it's always interesting to hear the NDP House leader talk about the bill and cutting red tape. We know, of course, that the NDP has never been in favour of cutting red tape.

We heard yesterday a number of the members suggest that this was an omnibus bill, all 20 pages of it. They were having some difficulty keeping track of all of the things that were mentioned in the bill. There are a number of items in this bill which duplicate federal legislation. It is obvious that we would remove duplicated legislation. It's not only in the interests of the people of the province of Ontario, but it's in the interests of serving what the Premier and Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade had talked about right from the beginning when we were elected as government: It's helping reduce trade barriers between the provinces, and part of that is helping to eliminate duplicate regulation.

We've said there are over 300,000 regulations. Our nearest competitor in this is British Columbia with half the regulations. Nobody is talking about removing important regulations that protect people and communities. It's quite obvious that when there is a duplicate regulation, you can eliminate it.

Now, I know the members opposite have talked about schedule 10 of Bill 66. The government has made a commitment to remove that from the legislation. I can tell you that in my community, this has been a bit of a setback for us, to be honest with you. Our community now faces an \$80-million unfunded liability. The lack of our ability to address this, which would have come through Bill 66, is a problem for my community. When the members opposite say there were no communities that were in

favour of this, they're wrong. But the government listened, the minister listened, and we're moving forward with legislation that will begin the process of eliminating red tape. But this is really just the first step. There is a lot more to do, and we encourage and invite all members opposite as well to join us in this because it's good for Ontario and it's good for taxpayers.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Smith: I was in the House yesterday as well listening to the speech about it, and there were a few things that jumped out at me. One was that of the 60 minutes that the NDP had to speak on it, 19 minutes were dedicated to a section that we've already said we're going to take out. I don't know why they were fighting over on that one, why they were so obsessed with that.

Just to get to that one section though, section 10: In the St. Catharines Standard there was an article on January 18 talking about how it was actually going to benefit the Niagara region. The Niagara region was one of those places where, in the speech yesterday, they mentioned that no, it wasn't going to help them.

On January 22, Frank Campion, the mayor of Welland, said, "We firmly believe in Welland that we do need these tools. We're very supportive of the concept of this type of tool because we've had to work without the tool and it makes it very, very difficult."

It was really interesting that the NDP spent a third of their time talking about something that was being taken out. They were against that portion of the bill being in there, so I was really surprised by that.

What surprised me the most was the things that they didn't talk about. They didn't talk about the amendment to the Agricultural Employees Protection Act to cover ornamental horticultural workers. I know that there are a number of members of the NDP who have worked in the farming industry, and I'm surprised that they didn't stand up and say, "Thank you very much for helping us with the ornamental horticultural workers."

Another one that jumped out at me that they didn't talk about—it's okay to oppose, but it's also nice to hear some things that they agree with. I was surprised that they didn't talk about the Ministry of Transportation and the fact that we're allowing electric motorcycles on controlled highways. This is something that would be great for the environment because if you can take that electric motorcycle and drive it on any highway, you're reducing gas.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm pleased to be able to respond to the debate on this very lengthy, very comprehensive bill, I guess we could say.

I want to respond to some of the comments just made by the member opposite as to why the official opposition would perhaps still be talking about schedule 10 when the government has apparently said that they're willing to scrap that schedule. I'm going to bring you back to the election campaign, when the members opposite, the Conservative Party, really didn't have a platform. We didn't

really know what was coming and we didn't know what they were going to do, but one thing was for sure: We knew that Doug Ford was going to open up the greenbelt to business. You may recall that. Then, what do you know? There's an uproar, and he backs away; the Premier backs away. Then, lo and behold, it appears again in a piece of legislation.

A few weeks ago, I held a town hall in my community on environment issues. The number one concern that people had was the greenbelt and protecting the greenbelt and the threat of this legislation when it comes to the greenbelt. By that point, it had been a matter of days since the government had announced that they were going to cave, frankly, to the enormous pressure that exists out there and to back off on that schedule. I was told explicitly by the many, many people who attended that town hall from my community, "Don't trust them. Don't let it go until it's absolutely gone from that bill. Make sure it's eliminated before you let this matter go." I think we heard that loud and clear. We are also going to be watching very carefully to make sure the government doesn't find some other way, through their backroom conversations, to bring back changes to open up the greenbelt to development.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the member from Niagara Centre for his reply.

Mr. Jeff Burch: It's an honour to rise and complete my comments on Bill 66. Thank you, my friend from Davenport, for clearing up why exactly we need to address schedule 10. It's really a matter of trust.

Bill 66 does very little to address red tape, as my friend from Waterloo said earlier in the week. At most, it addresses Scotch tape. As my friend pointed out, there is a downloading of red tape to municipalities, which I must say is a rather timid way to approach the issue.

The worst thing about this bill, which does nothing to make Ontario more competitive, is that it treats important environmental and safety regulations as red tape. Speaker, the Greenbelt Act is not red tape. It protects important farmland. The Clean Water Act is not red tape. It responded to people dying in Walkerton. Legislation around child care is not red tape. It was a response to children dying.

What this government has set up with schedule 10 is a system where they can play municipalities against each other to see who is willing to bend or break environmental protections to get development dollars, by making an application to the minister. It's a way for the government to force municipalities to absorb the political hit for environmentally questionable developments promoted by this government and their friends when the government doesn't have the guts to do it themselves through ministerial order. What this government didn't anticipate is that municipalities would stand up, recognize bad policy and say no to the government.

1620

Let's hope this government withdraws schedule 10 in committee, as they said they would, in its entirety without bringing any of it back through the back door. We can do better than this, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? I recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Laurie Scott: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Applause.

Hon. Laurie Scott: Thank you. I seem to have brought my cheering section with me. That's good.

I'm very happy to rise in the Legislature to speak on Bill 66, the Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act. This bill is the government's next step in reducing the regulatory burden throughout government. The Ontario PC Party understands that a heavy regulatory burden makes it hard to do business and hard to create jobs.

In the past, the Wynne Liberals and their NDP allies had fundamentally different ideas. I even heard some this afternoon in the short time I've been here. Government intrusion into the lives of workers and entrepreneurs was their only economic instinct. Higher taxes, onerous regulation and suspicion of business seemed to be the guiding principles of everything they did. The Ontario they left us is irrationally overregulated, uncompetitive and horribly in debt. Let's not fool ourselves: The situation is bad, but it's nothing that good policy and strong political will can't solve.

Bill 66 is the latest portion of our plan to turn Ontario around. One of our government's main tasks is making it easier to work and create new jobs in Ontario. We need to keep regulations and payroll taxes reasonable and manageable, and we need to let common sense inform good policy. This is the primary motivation behind Bill 66.

In the next few minutes, I'm going to address three subjects. Number one is the philosophy and context that inspired the Ministry of Labour reforms in Bill 66; number two, the content of the specific Ministry of Labour reforms; and number three, the principles supporting schedule 9 of the bill, the portion of the bill commonly referred to as "open tendering."

As Minister of Labour, my vision is an Ontario that is the best place in North America to recruit, to retain and reward workers for the jobs of today and tomorrow. Since being named Minister of Labour last July, I've introduced multiple labour market reforms. We put York University students back in the classroom—the Back to Class Act. It sent tens of thousands of York University students back to the classroom and ended the longest post-secondary strike in Canadian history.

We were able to cut WSIB premiums by nearly \$1.5 billion, effective January of this year.

We repealed the job-killing aspects of the previous government's Bill 148. Our Bill 47 reduced burdens on our job creators while preserving real benefits for Ontario workers.

Through Bill 57, our government finally allowed full-time firefighters to volunteer in their local communities, and we restored transparency and accountability to interest arbitration for firefighters.

As minister, I made common sense reforms to hazardous materials labelling, and I brought Ontario's health and

safety training standards into the 21st century for workers and employers at 50,000 Ontario businesses.

Our labour market reforms so far will save governments and businesses more than \$4 billion annually. I always say "so far," Madam Speaker, because the task is far from over.

Expensive, burdensome and pointless regulations are unnecessarily squeezing businesses in every economic sector. In some cases they are driving jobs and investment out of Ontario. Ontario has nearly 400,000 regulatory requirements. Far too many of these are inefficient, inflexible and just plain out of date. Many of them duplicate federal or municipal regulations. They contain heavy-handed requirements that cost companies a lot of money and add paperwork without any public benefit.

Many companies have had enough of the high cost of doing business in Ontario. The result is that they're simply not investing, modernizing or expanding here. I know there are countless stories I hear every day, and I know that members across the way have got to be hearing the same stories in their ridings.

Before our PC government was elected, businesses were taking their investments to more welcoming places, shifting their entire operations to the US. One Ontario businessperson famously said that moving production from Ontario to Ohio was like moving "from a torture chamber to a candy store." Madam Speaker, those stories shouldn't be heard in the province of Ontario. That is not what we want to hear from the businesses in the provinces of Ontario. Businesses are telling us about the gap between Ontario and the US states that are our competitors. Until the recent election of the PC government, Ontario's regulatory burden seemed to get worse and worse every year. We cannot continue to drive companies and jobs away.

The centrepiece of Bill 66 is an aggressive plan to reduce by 25% the number of regulatory compliance requirements affecting businesses. Our plan will achieve \$300 million in cost savings for businesses. Ontario will meet that target by June 2020, 16 months from today. Our plan will direct \$300 million away from needless red tape into new jobs and higher income for Ontario workers. Ontario businesses should be working to put money into the pockets of Ontario workers, not spending it to work around Ontario government rules.

Our government is committed to maintaining the rules and regulations that keep Ontario workers and families safe. I know the member from Timmins—James Bay mentioned that. Absolutely: Worker safety is paramount. But costly, burdensome and pointless regulations need to go.

We also want to make it clear, easier and faster for companies to comply with the rules of doing business in Ontario. Bills 47 and 57, both passed by this Legislature before the Christmas holiday, were the first steps in our plan to open Ontario for business. They removed onerous regulatory burdens for businesses while maintaining strong protections for workers. Bill 66, Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act, will build on that momentum from Bills 47 and 57 with a far-reaching plan to reduce red tape across the government.

There are more than 30 items in Bill 66. I'll let some of my other colleagues speak in favour of their respective ministerial responsibilities, but allow me to tell the House about the three exciting labour reforms in Bill 66:

- (1) Bringing employment rights into the 21st century;
- (2) Making it easier to earn extra income; and
- (3) Clarifying that public sector employers are not construction companies.

First, through Bill 66 we are proposing to remove the requirement for employers to physically post the Employment Standards Act poster in the workplace. Today in Ontario, employers need to give each worker a copy of the poster and post the physical poster in the workplace. This poster shows Ontario workers their rights under the Employment Standards Act. Madam Speaker, perhaps this approach made sense in the 1950s when workers gathered in the lunchroom or everyone worked on the same floor. Today, the workplace could be a GO train, a coffee shop, a construction site or a home office. We're bringing the poster requirement into the 21st century. If passed, our reform will mean that employers will be responsible for sending a copy of the poster directly to their workers.

1630

Ontario workers will know their rights, and Ontario businesses won't be trapped under regulations designed for the 1950s. Madam Speaker, they're actually going to have more information than what's contained in a poster. They can actually click on a link in different sections of the act and can be more readily informed at the click of a button. That is, I think, time that this has come. We were happy to place that in Bill 66.

Second, we're eliminating the requirements for workers and employers to apply to the Ministry of Labour after they have both agreed to additional weekly hours of work and overtime averaging. We will retain the requirement for written agreements with employees, but applying for permission to the Ministry of Labour will no longer be necessary. Today, in our province, if an Ontarian wants to work extra overtime hours and earn more money for their family, the government can say no, Madam Speaker. It's completely absurd that this is occurring. The government should not be overruling Ontario workers when they freely volunteer to work extra hours and earn extra income. We are returning that freedom to Ontario workers. As my NDP colleagues will appreciate, Bill 66 is a huge win for worker choice and worker freedom. By streamlining overtime rules, Bill 66 will reduce unnecessary regulatory burdens on employers and put more money into the pockets of Ontario workers.

Third, the last major reform in Bill 66 will finally clarify that public sector employers are not construction employers for purposes of the Labour Relations Act. Schedule 9 of Bill 66 will explicitly deem that municipalities, school boards, hospitals, colleges, universities and other public bodies are "non-construction employers" under the Labour Relations Act. By clarifying that public sector employers are not construction employers, we are deliberately preserving Ontario's construction labour relations regime for construction companies. The misapplication of section 123 of the Labour Relations Act to

broader public sector entities is known generally as the fight for "open tendering." In Ontario, a number of broader public sector employers have become bound to province-wide collective agreements intended to govern the labour relations between construction workers and construction companies. But municipalities, school boards and hospitals are obviously not construction businesses. The proposed amendments are expected to increase competitiveness for broader public sector construction projects.

The first two items I mentioned are small tweaks which will make things a little bit easier for employers, but the third—open tendering—is a major change. When a municipality or other public sector employer becomes bound to construction collective agreements, the employer can only tender construction work to companies that are also party to that same province-wide collective agreement. This misapplication of the Labour Relations Act leads to fewer construction companies bidding on public infrastructure projects and fewer construction workers getting a shot at each job. Less competition also means higher prices for Ontario taxpayers. A recent study estimated our reforms could save Ontario taxpayers \$370 million annually in reduced construction costs for the municipalities most acutely affected.

Madam Speaker, I have known you for quite a few years now; you know I like to solve problems. In politics I like to solve problems. In nursing I like to solve problems. It takes a little longer in politics than it does in nursing to solve problems. Many of my colleagues and former colleagues in this House have been pushing to solve this problem of open tendering for some time. The first Fair and Open Tendering Act was tabled back in 2013 by one of my former opposition colleagues. Sadly, the Liberals and their NDP enablers defeated that bill.

At that time, the current Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing pointed out that nearly 500,000 Ontarians were looking for work and that open tendering would have done a lot to create more work and more jobs, but the previous government wasn't interested. But now things are different, and I'm pleased that the problems of closed tendering can finally be solved, if Bill 66 passes.

As I said, I'm in politics and I like to solve problems—

Hon. Bill Walker: And you're good at it.

Hon. Laurie Scott: Well, I try. Thank you very much.

Interjections.

Hon. Laurie Scott: Thank you very much. I appreciate the support.

But instead of trying to convince people that they don't know what's best for them or don't understand their own lives, politicians need to learn to listen and to help people. Under the Ford PC government, Ontario wants to be the best place in North America to recruit, to hire and to reward workers, again, for not only the jobs of today, but the jobs of tomorrow.

The status quo is not always fair to the construction companies and construction workers who cannot work on public projects in their own communities. Take the city of Hamilton, for instance. Back in 2005, the city of Hamilton was obliged to join a province-wide labour agreement

governing construction workers and construction companies. After 2005, the city of Hamilton could only work with construction companies organized by that same union. Any other bids were rejected out of hand. Other local construction companies, including companies associated with the other unions, cannot build municipal projects in Hamilton.

So in Hamilton, construction companies working with one specific union have a monopoly on all city work. Other workers are allowed to pay taxes in Hamilton, but they aren't allowed to build in Hamilton. After 2005, infrastructure costs in Hamilton soared by 40%. For example, the first wastewater project after 2005 cost \$24 million more than the city expected, in large part because the competitive bidding process was restricted.

Waterloo is another famous example. The entire region of Waterloo was deemed a "construction employer" after two regional employees building a shed in December 2012 signed union cards. The region fought against that designation but was defeated in July 2014. The result is that local workers and local companies were shut out from municipal construction projects for the past five years.

Closed tendering stifles competition and drives up the price of essential local infrastructure. Our communities need sewers, roads, schools, hospitals and water treatment facilities. The Labour Relations Act should not make it harder to take care of Ontario residents. The Labour Relations Act should not force public sector employers into province-wide construction collective agreements intended to govern construction companies.

However, Madam Speaker, my greater concern is that construction workers should not be unfairly excluded from working on public projects in their own local communities. All construction workers deserve a shot at helping to build the community where they live and pay taxes. Our proposed change will level the playing field for everyone. If you can do the work, you should have a shot at the job. This is a question of fairness.

I'm pleased to say that the government of Ontario is finally taking action. I know that there have been some objections to this policy proposal, and I'm listening to them. Those of us on this side of the House know the frustration of a government that refuses to listen; we lived that for nearly 15 years. Our government is always engaged in meaningful consultation and our government is happy to listen to all sides of an issue, and I appreciated the diverse feedback received in response to schedule 9 of Bill 66.

1640

I believe Ontario workers understand that cutting red tape and fiscal prudence are the way to a more efficient and productive economy. Workers across all trades and professions treat their hard-earned money with respect, and they want their governments to do the same. Working people should have confidence in reasonable and predictable regulations, and everyone who works should have the confidence of a good job and a safe workplace. In a prosperous society, people are free to choose their work arrangements, businesses are motivated to reward their

workers and governments stay out of the way. Bill 66 is an example of reasonable rules and a common-sense approach to government.

Madam Speaker, we want to be the best place in North America to work, to live and to prosper. Thank you very much for allowing me the time on Bill 66.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jill Andrew: I am grateful for the opportunity to join the conversation on government Bill 66, Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act. The Minister of Labour mentioned that Bill 66 is a big win for workers' choice and workers' freedom, but I wonder if it's a big win for workers' safety, and for that, I think the answer is a resounding no.

I'm going to talk to schedule 9, a schedule which essentially redefines the definition of "construction worker," and I fear that this move by the Conservative government will allow for the sweeping in of unskilled labour instead of skilled labour. I wonder if this schedule has more to do with the Conservatives' unwillingness to recognize the importance and the necessity of our unions that work very, very hard to protect the rights, the safety, and the health and wellness of our workers. The Conservative government must remember that unionized skilled labour jobs are safer jobs, and they can also be well-paying jobs. This Conservative government needs to support workers, and by supporting workers, I say let's prioritize safety.

And while we're at it, the government needs to support students who are interested in pursuing trades through OSAP grants, not loans. If we really want to put Ontario on a track of competitiveness, if we really want to talk about building our economy, we do that by investing in the most important folks. We do that by investing in our youth, our future leaders, our future labour workers. We invest in their rights, and we say yes to unions, not no.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions and comments? I recognize the member for Brampton South.

Mr. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker—Madam Speaker. My apologies.

Once again, I'm very excited to speak to this bill in the House. I want to commend the great work by the Minister of Labour, who has been working so hard since being elected to ensure businesses can really grow in Ontario, because we saw 15 years of waste, mismanagement and scandal and an environment that was created which drove businesses out of Ontario. So it's about time that we have a government that is willing to make Ontario the economic engine of this country that it once was.

We started off by recognizing the fact that there are 380,000 regulations in this province—380,000 regulations. It's an incredible amount that's really slowing down the growth of business in this province. That's why it's so necessary to address the amount of regulation and red tape here, because when businesses can thrive, communities will thrive. Our communities will grow and we'll have higher-paying jobs across this province. That's exactly

what our government has been doing since being elected. That's the exact aim of this piece of legislation that we have before the House.

You know what? It was one of our core responsibilities and core promises to the people of Ontario that when we got elected: Ontario was going to be open for business. Ontario was going to be open for jobs, because one of the most important things a government can do is bring high-paying, well-paying jobs to this province. We've started that, whether it was with the reduction in the WSIB for many of the businesses, whether it was what this bill is doing, reducing red tape, or whether it's making life more affordable for so many people in this province by making sure fuel prices are reduced by 4.6 cents a litre.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and comments?

Ms. Suze Morrison: I want to thank the member opposite for her debate. But I want to start today by rejecting the entire premise of Bill 66, and that premise that we see threaded throughout this legislation is that regulations are, at their core, inherently bad. In the words of the member opposite—in her remarks, she went so far as to say that “costly, burdensome and pointless regulations need to go.” But so many of the regulations that we have in our province, like the ones that are being slashed out of this bill, are good things. They do things like enhance the rights of workers in this province.

Specifically, when we look at the Employment Standards Act and the labour regulations that section 9 of Bill 66 seeks to eliminate, the member opposite spent a significant amount of time talking about a poster that employers are required to put up in their workplaces. This offensive poster, to my Conservative colleagues, is one that does nothing more than inform workers about their basic human rights, which I would argue is a good thing. This poster that this government is going so far as to try to censor from workplaces covers such scandalous topics as their requirements for minimum wage, the maximum number of hours that an employer can make a worker work, paternity leave, requirements for statutory holidays and a worker's right to vacation pay. Informing workers of their rights isn't a bad thing for business; it's simply the right thing to do.

I strongly encourage the members on the Conservative bench to stop looking at regulations as these things that are inherently bad, but rather as expansions on our legislation that provide for worker rights in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms promises freedom of association. That includes the right to collective bargaining. The government has no business inserting itself between labour unions and employers, to decide this relationship and the outcomes. In fact, many of these agreements between the employer and labour unions have been in place for many, many decades. This is a part of the labour and management agreement, so to make this decision without seeing how this is going to affect the structure of the relationship

between the labour unions and the employer is completely irresponsible and, really, another way to show that this government is just doing whatever it chooses to do, regardless of the rights that are currently present and existing.

Really, it's going to cause a lot of disruption. That disruption is not good for business. It's not good when they can't have that reliability of project completion—knowing that their work is going to be done to that standard and the quality that they're used to, and in a timely way.

I would really caution against schedule 9 in Bill 66 and the disruption that it provides with existing collective agreements that have been in place between the employer and labour for many, many decades. This disruption is not welcomed by many of the employers themselves. It's really just the Ford government once again inserting itself in something that is actually constitutionally guaranteed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the Minister of Labour for her reply.

Hon. Laurie Scott: I appreciate the comments made by the members from Toronto—St. Paul's, Brampton South, Toronto Centre and Scarborough—Guildwood.

1650

I think that they've maybe misinterpreted some parts of Bill 66. By proposing open tendering, this actually opens construction work—especially in municipalities that are closed tender right now—to union and non-union tenders. People who are union and non-union who live in those communities can bid on those projects. I just want to clear that up—that there's support from many unions for this piece in Bill 66 on open tendering. As I said earlier, we believe all construction workers deserve a shot at helping to build their communities where they live and they should have a level playing field in which to bid on those projects.

There is no decrease in health and safety regulations. Those are not the regulations we're targeting. But I encourage you to visit businesses in your ridings and constituents who talk about burdensome rules and regulations. We're not in any way affecting the health and safety of any workplace. That should not be tolerated. You won't get that from this government, but what you will get from this government is the fact that we want Ontario to be open for business. Smart labour market policy should set the rules of the game. If we provide the right rules, Ontario workers will win.

Madam Speaker, I strongly encourage members of the Legislature to support Bill 66, and I hope that passage does come quickly. Thank you very much for the opportunity.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always a pleasure to be able to stand in the House and talk about the issues of the day before the House.

For those of you who actually follow the House calendar and how things work, if there were ratings—Thursday afternoons at around 5 o'clock are the worst ratings in the system. So I would like to thank my fellow travellers who are here because this is when—it's actually

my favourite time in the Legislature, Thursday afternoons, private members' bills. After, we're all a bit relaxed, quite frankly. I'm speaking for myself but probably a few others: There are a few places I'd rather be than right here right now. Many of my colleagues have already gone home to their constituencies, where they like to be, but we're here, and I'm happy to be here. I'm very proud to be here.

I was listening to the Minister of Labour regarding—I'm going to get to Bill 66 in a minute, but this is pertinent to Bill 66—the removal of regulations. I'm a farmer. Coming from a small business background, I would say that small business people—probably large ones too—tend to dislike regulations. That is not rocket science. That is not a big revelation. The issue—and it's a fine line—is that there's a difference between regulations that are redundant, that are truly red tape, and regulations that are actually beneficial. When I hear the government talk about how they're going to shoot to get rid of 25% of the regulations within their first mandate—maybe their only mandate, if we have anything to do with it. At that rate, there's a good chance that a quarter of the regulations—a fairly big chunk of those were put in for a reason. Sometimes that reason might not be obvious, but it might come later.

This government has changed the Milk Act. The Milk Act regulates dairy farms. It regulates how milk is picked up. It regulates processing facilities.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, the Milk Act has been updated several times. I know a lot about the Milk Act.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm not the ultimate expert on the Milk Act.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for King–Vaughan will come to order.

Mr. John Vanthof: I totally agree with the member from King–Vaughan. People are very reluctant to open the Milk Act, for good reasons, but it was recently opened for a good individual reason: to allow a new processing facility to start. They changed the regulations for what you need to have for a bay where you deliver milk. You see the big silver trucks going down the road? They're full of milk—the ones with the blue cow on the side. When they go to a processing plant, they back into the processing plant. You're supposed to be able to seal the bays. They have to have floor drains and to have a certain height for ventilation and to be able to wash, because these trucks have to be sanitized.

This has been developed over many years. Every processing plant goes by the regulations. But a new one wanted to start, and they had an existing building, so the Milk Act was changed to accommodate that existing building. Okay. Is it possible? Yes. Is it advisable? I don't know. The reason those regulations were developed over years and years was to ensure that those trucks could be cleaned as easily and as safely as possible. That's why they were developed. Every time you make it a bit more—why you have floor drains and slopes is so that the soapy water

and the milk flow away from the walls. Why you have a certain height is so that the building ventilates easier. When you change it—okay, you can still wash the trucks. It's a little bit harder. Over 20 years, you might have—I'm not saying you will. It's up to the people running the plant. But again, if you've ever spilled milk in the bottom of your fridge, milk is going to be a little bit more work.

On an individual basis, maybe it made sense for that plant, but now all the other plants who have actually been following the rules—this plant is cheaper. So the next ones are all actually going to go backwards a little bit. Is that going to hurt anybody? I'm not saying it is, but could it? Yes. That's why each regulation—you can't look at it by just looking straight forward and say, "Well, all we have to do with this one"—I'm going to use this example—"is that we'll just have to high-pressure-wash or steam-clean for a couple of more minutes." But a couple more minutes each time over the 20- or 30-year life of that—do you know what's going to happen? You could very well not take that couple more minutes, and you'll get a bit of milk in the corners; you'll get more bacteria. You might; it's not a given, but that's why you have rules.

In a milk house, you have to have a drain in the middle of the milk house. Why? So that the water drains. If you want to change the rules so that you don't have to put drains—it's much cheaper. I had dairy milk cows for 30 years. If you don't have your drains in the right place, it's more trouble to clean, and as soon as it's more trouble to clean—you know, when things clean more by themselves—that's why you have regulations.

Am I going to stand here and say that that regulation is going hurt somebody? No, I'm not going to stand here and say that. That regulation is going to pose more risk; it is.

You have to be cognizant. If you're going to take out a quarter of the regulations in this province, you're inferring that all those regulations—and many of those regulations weren't just made by the previous Liberal administration. I'm not a big Liberal fan either, at all. But the way these guys talk, that everything that was ever put in in the last 15 years was wrong—even a broken clock is right twice a day.

This current administration is going to do some things right. I disagree with most of the stuff they do, but they have to be careful.

Getting to the bill: First of all, they're changing—and I'm going to focus on agricultural issues. They're making some changes regarding how farms are registered. It's going to be by third party. I've spoken to the OFA and to CFFO. They don't see a big problem. Again, I don't think it's in itself a big problem. It's going to be done by a third party. Obviously, the reason it's going to be done is not just for a regulation change but to save money.

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But we've had an example—not a farming example but a Ministry of Natural Resources example—where the moose tag draw used to be done by the government. Now it's done by a third party. Do you know where it's done? Tennessee. The Ontario moose tag draw is done in Tennessee.

Hon. Bill Walker: Who set that up?

Mr. John Vanthof: Yeah. But this one opens the door to the same thing. It opens the door to the same thing.

I want to get to the OFA and National Farmers Union and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario. Those are our three accredited farmer groups. Do you know how the government of the day doesn't like—"social democrat" is a very bad word for those guys. I remember that when I was first on the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, you didn't have to belong to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture or the National Farmers Union or the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario. It was voluntary.

As a member of the Timiskaming Federation of Agriculture, I spent a lot of my time going from farm to farm, trying to sell memberships so that we could gain enough critical mass to actually lobby the government. I spent a lot of time going from farm to farm to farm to farm. Lo and behold, the Bob Rae government got elected, and the Bob Rae government made it mandatory to belong to a farm organization. That was the Bob Rae government. So you either had to belong to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Christian Farmers Federation or the National Farmers Union. You had to belong.

I challenge anyone here to say that the OFA, the NFU and the CFFO aren't good for Ontario and aren't good for agriculture and aren't good for the province as a whole, because they bring agricultural issues to this House, to many other places and to consumers. But considering some of the fundraising letters coming out from the PC Party, where they're saying, for instance, that university students shouldn't be, because of all of the Marxist policies—well, you know what? I don't think that the OFA, the NFU and the CFFO have too many Marxist tendencies, yet they have to belong. Again, it's how you present things. So do you—

Hon. Sylvia Jones: They get a choice of three.

Mr. John Vanthof: You have a choice of three, but you have to belong to one. If you had your way, you would probably get rid of that because you believe in ultimate choice, right? That's what you believe. We don't believe that, and the OFA is a really good example of that.

Do I agree with everything the OFA lobbies for? No. Does the government agree with everything the OFA lobbies for? No. The OFA lobbies for their members, and their members are the majority of the farmers in Ontario—and so do the CFFO and the National Farmers Union. Do they always agree with each other? No. But they all provide a vital role.

So how this is being done: What they're basically privatizing is how farmers get registered to belong to these organizations. That's what's being changed here. Is it the end of the world? No. Is it a step towards privatization and loss of control of how it's done? Yes. Again, the world is not going to fall because of this in itself. But it is a step in the wrong direction.

I see I'm running out of time.

The step in the biggest wrong direction: The government has announced through Twitter that they're going to pull schedule 10. Basically, what schedule 10 is, is getting

to the greenbelt through the back door. They tried it once. If you remember, during the election campaign it came out that the candidate for Premier was basically promising to open up the greenbelt. It fell flat in the public. They backed away very quickly. Schedule 10 is an attempt to allow municipalities to ask for exemptions to access the greenbelt.

I'm going to give a shout-out where credit is due. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture, along with many municipalities, gave a resounding no. "No, not on our watch." I hope that this government actually listens. They listened to the resounding noes and it was, "Oh, we're not going to have enough friends." So I hope that they're taking it to heart and not simply thinking of another way, because the Premier-elect promising developers was strike one; the Premier trying to get municipalities to get to the greenbelt through the back door is strike two. Hopefully, they've figured out that this is not a winner, but I don't think they have. I think they're going to go for strike three—or maybe they think ball three, then ball four, and then somehow they're going to walk away with it. That's very concerning.

They'll say, "Oh, yes, but we said we are going to take it out." The fact is, they put it in the bill, so obviously they talked to somebody to put this in the bill. It's still in the bill. We have no control over what happens at committee in a majority government. So I hope they take the OFA and the municipalities to heart about "Leave the greenbelt alone."

What I can't figure out with the greenbelt with these guys—who created the greenbelt? If it was Bob Rae, you could say, "Oh, well, a socialist." It was Bill Davis—Bill Davis, a big greenbelt fan. I can remember at some point this was the best-ever government for the people. I think they forgot Bill Davis. Again, leave the greenbelt alone.

The problem with the whole greenbelt issue is, you could make a decent argument—if you wanted to expand into the greenbelt, you could make a decent argument if there was no other land in Ontario. Quite frankly, that's not the case. When we were at ROMA, the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, we had two presentations that were very striking. One was from the town of Erin—I believe it was Erin; I'm going off memory here. The town of Erin is in the Speaker's riding—not the Speaker of the day, but the Speaker Speaker. The Speaker has—how do I say it?—a handicap here in a way, because he's non-partisan, so it's hard for him to lobby. That municipality isn't impacted by the greenbelt. They've got lots of development land, but they lack a municipal sewage system. But they have lots of development land.

Let's focus on areas that aren't impacted by the greenbelt, areas that are brownfields. I know the greenbelt is easy because it's pretty, and on farmland it's easy to build. There are lots of pretty places in the greenbelt. Everybody wants to have a two-acre lot and a McMansion on the greenbelt; I can see that. But there are all kinds of other places in Ontario where we can actually do true development and leave the greenbelt alone for our children and grandchildren.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Is there a greenbelt in Hastings? There are lots of places in my riding that can be developed too. But why do you want—and I know why. It's cheap to build. It's close to people.

With schedule 10, it was kind of—and I can see it; I used to be a municipal councillor. Every municipal councillor and every mayor wants his or her municipality to grow. I fully understand that. When you're not looking at the big picture, it's just a little chunk here and a little chunk there. I understand that, but it's the government's role to say, "Whoa, we've got to look at the big picture here." And they were looking at the big picture. They're thinking, "We're going to give up all these little chunks. It will make our developer friends happy, and we won't really get blamed for it."

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I implore the government to take the resistance to opening up the greenbelt seriously and not try and go for another end run. I hope, Madam Speaker, that they're doing so, but I'm certainly not convinced because they're on two strikes now. I'm certainly not convinced, but if there's one thing they need to take to heart, it's to leave the greenbelt. Leave it for the future. We're going to need it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and comments? I recognize the member for Peterborough—Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I recognize you from Oshawa as well.

It's really interesting. I'm here listening to the speeches, and I think of a couple of a different things. First off is that government's responsibility is to regulate to the point of integrity, not to the point of interference. We have 380,000 regulations and we are well beyond interference.

As I was listening to the member across speaking, I couldn't help but think of the television show *Hoarders*, because I think that best represents where we are right now. We've hoarded so many regulations that the House is full. There's nothing more that you can do. There's no place to lie down. You can't set your food down someplace. There's no place to cook. There really isn't an opportunity to work in Ontario right now. We've stifled it. We've made it very, very difficult for industry to do anything, for business to do anything, for people to be successful. We need to change that. It's no different than the television show *Hoarders*.

Now, I have some mixed feelings on it, but I think it does represent that very, very well. We need to go in and clean up the mess. We need to reduce the number of regulations that we have in Ontario, and we have to do it in an intelligent way. What has happened over the last number of years—probably close to 20 of them; I'm not going to blame it all on the Liberals, although I'd love to. Over the last generation, we've been far too reactive and not proactive. We're taking a proactive approach now, and what we're doing is we're saying, "How do these regulations interfere? How do these regulations intersect with each other and create that environment like the hoarder's house?" We need to clean it up. We need to

bring it back to the point where people in Ontario are able to live in their homes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and comments?

Mr. Chris Glover: It's an honour to rise today to talk about Bill 66. I think I want to start with a definition. I think with this government, you need to redefine terms that are commonly used. When they talk about cutting red tape, what they actually mean is that they're going to be cutting worker, tenant and environmental protections. That's exactly what's in this bill.

In this bill, the first thing they've done—and this was happening before. The government already cut rent control so rents are skyrocketing across this province, but now they're going to strip the Ontario Energy Board of the authority to regulate rates charged by unit sub-meter providers. That's a mouthful, but what it actually means is that sometimes—and it already happens to some degree—the cost of electricity that tenants pay is doubled by the charge of just the administration fee for those sub-meter rentals. Just after an election, which was fought on, largely, electricity rates, this government is actually setting it up so that tenants will be paying more for their electricity.

It also enables the repeal of the Toxics Reduction Act so that more toxins will be in our environment.

But the biggest repeal, the biggest attack on protections, is for worker protections, and there are a number of schedules. Schedule 1 strips more agricultural workers of their right to collective bargaining and other rights under the Labour Relations Act. Schedule 9 removes the employer obligations—or reduces the employer obligations—to pay overtime. It also makes it open for the municipalities and school boards to hire non-unionized employees, so that construction workers across this province will be in a race for the bottom. That's what this is really about. Bill 66 is largely about creating a race to the bottom.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and comments?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I have to rise and talk about the greenbelt. The greenbelt is a permanent protected space in southwestern Ontario. It was established in 2005 by the former Liberal government. That's on record; it's known. One of the key aspects of the greenbelt is that it is permanent and protected. It protects our green space, farmlands, wetlands and watersheds for future generations.

I believe this is the third time that the Ford government and those who surround him have tried to build and to develop on the greenbelt. The first time was, I'm pretty sure, during the campaign, and it didn't go so well that that got out. So it was taken off the table, apparently.

But then there were other attempts made to develop the greenbelt. Hopefully, this third time—and I understand it was through a tweet that you've promised to not develop on the greenbelt and the withdrawing of schedule 10. Stick to that promise. This is a permanent, protected jewel. It's a treasure for future generations, and you should not be selling it off and threatening the protections and weakening them. I won't even talk about our watershed

and the protections there, and that you were trying to lower those standards.

I'm very glad that schedule 10 has been taken off the table. I hope that third time is the charm and that you won't try to build on the greenbelt again.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the honourable member for her comments. Madam Speaker, the revisionism that sometimes can manifest in this House is beautiful at times and somewhat confusing, because for the member opposite to attempt to lecture any parliamentarian in this House—former government members opposite served in the Bob Rae government; members who have served in the current government and perhaps some in the Harris government. There is only one political party and there is a singular person in this House who would have been at the cabinet table, who approved not one, not two, not five, not 10, but 17 exemptions to build on the greenbelt. The hypocrisy of some members is—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Stephen Lecce: I withdraw, Madam Speaker.

The irony is that the member opposite seems to want to lecture others on environmental protection. It is the member opposite and the Liberal Party's record that they had invested in US coal. It is the member opposite and her government who built 17 times on the greenbelt.

It is this political party that, through the living lands program, expanded park space in Ontario by the largest amount ever in the history. It is this party that initiated the first closure of a coal plant in the history of this province. It is this political party that created the Oak Ridges moraine which has protected the watershed for southern Ontario for a generation.

Madam Speaker, we are proud of our environmental record and we will continue to take action to protect the environment, to grow the economy, to put money back into the pockets of working people. But the irony of the member opposite is not lost on us, so we will take no lessons from the Liberals. We will learn to raise the bar to protect the environment, to grow the economy, and we'll do all of that without having to build 17 times on the greenbelt.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order. I will remind all members to direct their remarks to and through the Chair to keep the tenor of the House as it should be.

I return to the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane for his reply.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you to all of the honourable members who replied to my remarks.

I recently met with a mining company; I'm not going to name who. They're a big employer in my riding and actually employ 10,000 people worldwide. They're thinking about building a new mine in my riding. I put the question point blank: Are we over-regulated in Ontario? Her answer was, "No, the problem isn't the regulations.

We need strong regulations." They just opened a new mine in Nunavut that has stronger regulations. In Nunavut it took two years for the approval, and in Ontario it takes seven. That's the issue.

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We have to be careful. Simply removing regulations could actually slow things down, because you will have more—specifically, mining, forestry, agriculture. Deep down, they need strong regulations to be able to justify that they're doing things correctly, and if they can't, they're going to have problems.

So we have to focus on making sure that our regulatory process is more secure and that when someone applies to do something that they know if they apply on such a date that they will either have or not have their approval by a specific date. That's more important than taking away the regulations. Ask any mining company. Ask forestry companies. It's the security of the process—that you know if you apply that within a certain date you will either have your approval or be denied. That's the biggest problem in Ontario now: the length of time it takes to get things approved. That's a bigger problem than the regulations themselves.

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It's always an honour to rise in this House to speak to the legislation that is before the House and to have this debate.

Madam Speaker, the Ford government is becoming reliant on omnibus bills—bills that are loaded with fundamental changes that are impacting all Ontarians. Bill 66 is a prime example. An Act to restore Ontario's competitiveness by amending or repealing certain Acts—and it's doing just that.

Schedule 9 of Bill 66 is a complete and utter affront to the rights of workers across this province. It is one thing for a government to take away sick days, as this government has just done; it is quite another for this government to remove the very bargaining rights and collective agreements that function to protect workers from exploitation, from unsafe work environments and corporate greed by unilaterally changing employer status.

The government should be removing schedule 9 from Bill 66 entirely. Alternatively, if schedule 9 is to remain, the government owes it to the people of this province to clarify whether existing collective bargaining agreements will be honoured and maintained even as the designation of the various employers shifts. Some of these collective agreements that have been in place with the city of Toronto and the universities go back further than 50 years. At the absolute least, these agreements should continue to be honoured by the employers and by this province.

The government's removal of the previous section 10 of Bill 66, as we've been debating, and its greenbelt development provisions shows that they will yield to pressure if our voices come together loudly and clearly.

I've spoken to individuals from trade unions across this province. It is clear that schedule 9 moves to release certain entities from the collective agreements, and it will

only serve to hurt workers and to hurt businesses in the process. Bill 66 is yet another example of an omnibus bill that this government is jamming through the legislative process. Omnibus bills serve to stifle the voice of individual issues, as the sheer amount of change that is present in them doesn't give us enough time to provide scrutiny, to debate that each of them would deserve.

Schedule 9, and its amendments to the Labour Relations Act, is a clear example of a massive shift and change to the current regulations, and that change is being hidden, buried, in the depths of this bill. Passing schedule 9 of Bill 66 would not only restrict the rights of workers; it would serve to threaten the collective bargaining rights that employees and unions have already worked so hard to hammer out—some for many decades, as I've stated. Passing this legislation would be akin to taking a collective bargaining agreement in your hands and just tearing it up.

Under Bill 66, schedule 9, universities, municipalities and other employers would move from construction employer designation to non-construction employer designation. This will open up the number of spots for eligible bidders on any contract extended by the employer and will inevitably function as a race to the bottom for contractors who are willing to go lower and lower with wages, minimal benefits and maybe even standards that are associated with maintaining health and safety across work sites.

Competition is absolutely healthy for business, and it is important for our economy, but the sheer lack of protections that comes from a completely deregulated bidding structure will not benefit the workers and the people of this province. It actually creates more instability for businesses and the employers themselves.

Unions have a long history of putting time and effort into the training of their members. For example, for the apprentices, the unions' completion rate is 95% to 98%. However, the total completion rate for all apprentices is actually closer to 50%. If you look at this from the perspective of those within the unions and those who are not who are going through that process, that threshold is well below 50% for non-union. If schedule 9 is passed, it will prevent more apprentices from gaining access to valuable opportunities.

The unions' investments in training do not stop at the apprenticeship level. As one example, the carpenters' union represents 25,000 members across the province, and this union collects \$1.10 from every member for every hour of work to go to training exercises and to resources. It is actually a kind of continuous improvement that they're making to their workplace. This is the kind of investment that is important and vital to good business. Safe work environments with properly trained and certified employees are what we should be striving for. These unions have invested in an environment of continuous improvement that benefits all of us.

Ontario's record of completion of large-scale construction projects with a record of safety is well regarded around the world. We need to do all that we can to maintain and to uphold these standards.

I want to highlight what experts in the industry call the union safety effect. Unions play an integral role in improved occupational health and safety outcomes. What does this look like? It means that respected collective bargaining rights result in less injuries and a more secure work environment for workers. It means that unions bring less time and efficiency loss for employers by having well-trained employees. Safe work environments are a win-win situation for workers and employers alike.

I want this government to explain why they are outrightly objecting to safer work environments by going down this path. Is this engaging in union-busting? Is this undermining the role of our labour unions? Since they were elected, the Ford government has continuously pitted employees against employers. This actually started with cancelling the minimum wage increase that was scheduled to happen on January 1, 2019. These two groups should not be on opposite ends of the debate on schedule 9 of Bill 66.

The labour supply argument is an important one to discuss. If Bill 66 passes and a slew of public entities begin consideration of non-construction employers, the collective bargaining rights of many employees will be completely ignored.

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Unions help to guarantee that there will be a supply of trained, available labourers for any construction project that may arise. However, with an increase in open-shop employment, that has no guarantee on labour numbers or hours available. There is absolutely no accountability to the employers themselves. This actually raises uncertainty for the employers. Will their projects get done on time and within costs?

Bill 66, schedule 9, threatens the stability of employers' construction and maintenance requests and therefore threatens the livelihood and the success of their operations. Bill 66 would amend the Labour Relations Act to deem several public entities, including municipalities, school boards, hospitals, universities and colleges, among others, to be non-construction employers. Due to population density, this move would seriously impact Toronto and the surrounding greater Toronto and Hamilton region.

I recently spoke to members of a local trade union. These unions have long-standing contracts with the city of Toronto, with the Canadian National Exhibition and the University of Toronto. They are concerned. They are worried about the impact of this legislation. This government is all about cuts, cuts, cuts, but clearly, someone is not crunching the right numbers. A key aspect of government spending is, of course, pension plans. Unions, through dues, are able to provide their retired employees' pensions through their own schemes. What does this mean? While unionized labour might be slightly more expensive in the short term, unionization actually saves governments money in the long run through using their own resources to provide retired employees with their well-earned and deserved pension.

These unions provide a standard of work that benefits the workers, the employers and the broader community. If

Bill 66 is passed, entities such as municipalities and universities will legally be allowed to wiggle out of collective bargaining agreements and will be able to hire non-unionized workers. These non-unionized workers, also known as non-tendered or open-shop workers, have to work many more hours than union members only to qualify for fewer benefits.

Aside from fostering safer work environments as well as stabilizing the labour supply, unions are an integral part of our communities as well. Just recently, the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades went out into the community and provided their services to a local organization, the Jamaican Canadian Association, during Black History Month. I actually participated in this environment. There were retirees, union workers and apprentices. I even met a young man who was thinking of getting into the trades. This strong support for local communities and giving back is part of their tradition.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms promises freedom of association and it includes the right to collective bargaining. By shifting public entities such as universities into the non-construction employer category and strongly affecting union members who are direct employees of these entities, Bill 66, schedule 9, presents an infringement on the charter of every single individual living in Ontario. By attempting to pass this as law, the government is ensuring that, as one trade union member said to me, only the lawyers will profit.

Lastly, I want to ask the government for some answers. What happens to union members who are direct employees of public entities that will be moving into the non-construction employer designation? What happens to their pensions, their benefits and their positions? For all its talk on competitiveness, this government has done so very little to explain the mechanisms through which this legislation will supposedly benefit employees. The benefits are incredibly difficult to see from where we're sitting and from where the thousands of union members across this province are sitting.

I also want to take a moment to talk about another section in this omnibus bill. As I said earlier, when you bury the legislation that is really vital to a particular sector in the middle of a bill, sometimes things get missed. We can't afford to miss this one, and that is the child care section.

In 2014, the Ontario Ombudsman's report—it's 142 pages, and it includes advice. It's really a cautionary tale for all of us. In the executive summary, it starts:

"Every weekday, hundreds of thousands of working parents in Ontario entrust their children to the care of others. Unfortunately, some children are placed at unnecessary risk in unlicensed and illegally operated child care centres, often hidden behind the closed doors and shuttered windows of private homes.

"The dangers associated with these child care arrangements were brought into sharp focus when, over a seven-month period in 2013-2014, four young children died in unlicensed child care settings in the greater Toronto area."

We should never have to face this again in our province. The Ministry of Education's weakening of the ratios for child care is of great concern.

If we look at page 11 of the bill, schedule 3, we see the amendments that are being referred to: striking out "two" children and substituting "three"; striking out "four" children and substituting "six" children; striking out "two" children and substituting "three" children—and it goes on and on. It places young children—toddlers, babies—in homes that have more children and fewer adults and, in some instances, fewer certified individuals overseeing the quality of that child care.

I understand that we need to increase access to more affordable child care. We know how costly child care is. In my own riding of Scarborough—Guildwood, this is a great need: to have quality, affordable, accessible child care. But it is our duty to ensure that every child is safe across all of our systems that we have the responsibility to regulate. The lowering of these standards by increasing those ratios of adults in the home to a child is concerning because it puts children—it puts babies—at risk.

When we were growing up, my younger brother, who was quite a bit younger, was sent to what was known as the babysitter. I remember that when he was a toddler, there was a day when he actually wandered off and followed the other children in the home to the bus stop because he wanted to go to school as well. The bus driver looked at him and said, "Well, you're not on my list to pick up," and actually drove away and left him at the bus stop. He was probably about two years old. Luckily, someone found him alone on the street and called the police. I don't know how this little guy was able to communicate at the age of two who his parents were and where he lived. Of course, he was reported missing, and there was a big search. My parents were called from work. This little guy was able to find his way home safely.

That type of care, where it's unregulated and without standards, should not be happening in 2019 in our province. We shouldn't be going backwards. We should be strengthening protection for every child. We should be providing the best training, the best standards, to make sure that every child has that safety and that protection when they are in a child care setting

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I know we need more spaces; we need access to more spaces. We need quality child care. But lowering the standards, I believe, is the wrong approach because it puts the situation where there will be a greater number of very young children, babies, toddlers, potentially in a home with many other children who are not captured by the ratio and just one adult in that home.

We have to reconsider that and do everything possible to maintain and uphold the standards. I hope the Minister of Education has taken the time to really look at the Ombudsman's report. It's 143 pages. I've only read you a paragraph and a half, but it is a cautionary tale, one which we should all be very mindful of.

Finally, Madam Speaker, in my last few seconds I just want to say that there's much more contained in this

omnibus bill. I know that the debate that has been ensuing has really pointed out that these are fundamental changes that will affect all Ontarians. They need to be considered carefully, and this government should not use its majority to jam through legislation that is going to be harmful to our labour unions, to their workers and to employers themselves but, rather, if you are interested in restoring Ontario's competitiveness—and I would argue that Ontario continues to be competitive—then you would provide legislation that helps to build us up, not down.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Nina Tangri: We heard time and time again about how burdensome red tape and duplication hurt businesses. Companies understand that safety is key and very important.

The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane spoke of how repealing the Toxics Reduction Act will endanger people. Perhaps he should understand that we are repealing it due to its duplication to the federal Chemicals Management Plan and that this becomes effective December 31, 2021, not immediately. This is when all substances regulated by Ontario will be covered by the federal program.

The member from Scarborough–Guildwood constantly paints a frightening picture if there's a level playing field for more contractors to bid on jobs by public bodies. Increased competition drives down costs, and this benefits all Ontarians and all taxpayers. The member opposite also speaks of only specific union workers being capable of completing jobs. She accuses our government of pitting employers versus employees. However it's their government that was constantly previously pitting employers versus employees, to no end. She wants to always vilify employers, calling them greedy. We heard that from her today.

I urge all members in this House to support Bill 66. Let's restore competitiveness in Ontario. This is how we create more jobs. This is how our government is working. We're listening to the people of Ontario. It is our responsibility as a government to help create the environment for more businesses to locate here in Ontario, to expand, to hire more people, and it's our responsibility to make sure we have the skilled talent ready for those jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and comments?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This bill is titled Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act, and yet I haven't seen anything in the bill that is actually going to truly make Ontario competitive—things like universal pharmacare. Businesses are interested in universal pharmacare because they care about the health of the workforce. They know that a healthy workforce is a productive workforce and securing the health of their workforce at a far lower cost to businesses and to society is a good thing. It makes Ontario competitive.

The other thing that businesses look for is talent. Where do you find talent? You find talent in places where the post-secondary education is affordable, where students are

able to go to university to get the skills that they need in order to be able to attract companies.

Yet in this province, what we do is make post-secondary education inaccessible and unaffordable for students. We see that students are graduating with more debt than ever.

Businesses are not interested in coming to places where there is no talent pool. So if we want to make sure that Ontario is competitive, we need to ensure that we have the top level of students graduating from our universities.

The other thing businesses are interested in is actually affordable housing because—guess what?—employees need to live in the places where they work. If you have places like Toronto, where there's skyrocketing rent, unaffordable houses, and you're unable to get into the housing market even with a decent salary, where is everybody else going? Anywhere but Toronto. Businesses are not going to be coming to Toronto, because it's unaffordable.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and comments?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I'm privileged for this opportunity to rise today and speak on the Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act, Bill 66.

If passed in the current form, the Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act, along with regulatory changes, will help to cut business costs, harmonize regulatory requirements with other jurisdictions, end duplication and reduce barriers to investment.

We have made it clear that we are committed to strong enforcement action to protect our lakes, waterways and groundwater from pollution.

Madam Speaker, at the same time, we must acknowledge that there is too much red tape, and it can take years for businesses to navigate the development approvals process.

Therefore, with the Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act, we're going to lower business costs to make Ontario more competitive. We're going to continue to work hard every day to create and keep good jobs right here in Brampton, because we listen, we care and we deliver.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jessica Bell: I rise to speak about Bill 66. The Ford government likes to claim that this bill is about cutting red tape, but there are many examples in this bill where what is being cut is not red tape at all; it's important regulations that protect our most vulnerable, like children, protect our environment and protect our workers.

One example is schedule 3, which is of particular concern to me as a parent with children of three and six, both of whom use child care. That is the loosening of regulations on child care that would increase the number of kids under two who are in the care of a caregiver, and also increase the number of kids under two who are in the care of an unlicensed caregiver.

There's an article here that was written by the University of Toronto, which is in my riding, that expresses

concern about the loosening of those regulations. It states: “Deaths in child care occur with such alarming frequency in the United States and Canada that they tend to resonate in the news for only a short period of time.

“A disproportionate number of these deaths occur in unlicensed home child care....”

I find that very upsetting. What’s even more upsetting is that this article’s expert argues that there are more regulations on the safety of dogs and dog walkers, and on the food that we eat from street vendors, than there are regulations on unlicensed home child care. I don’t think that’s right.

There is no doubt that there is a child care crisis in Toronto. A lady who came in yesterday, whose son has autism, has taken her younger child out of child care because she can’t afford to pay for her son’s care and also have her child in child care. That’s not right.

But the solution is not to loosen regulations; it’s to invest in child care so that everyone can afford—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. I return to the member from Scarborough–Guildwood for her reply.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I want to say thank you to the members from Parkdale–High Park, Mississauga–Streetsville, Brampton West and Cambridge for your comments.
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I do want to say—I think it was the member from Brampton West—that when it comes to the Liberal record on the environment, the greenbelt is part of that record. The closing of Ontario’s coal-fired plants is also part of that record. Now it’s up to the Ford government to build its record. So far, it’s not doing so well. It scrapped and cancelled, as one of the first acts, the cap-and-trade system to lower greenhouse gas emissions, sadly, rather than looking at how to improve or build on it. Now they’re struggling to put forward a plan that actually will get results of lowering GHGs in this province. They seem to be really struggling to come up with ideas.

They also cancelled incentives for electric vehicles and automation of vehicles. Really, that’s where the puck is going. When you look at the auto sector and you look at where investments are going around the world, they are going towards clean vehicles like electric vehicles. Yet this government did not see any value in continuing those incentives and the innovation, the research, that needs to happen.

When we talk about the competitiveness of this province, we have to talk about not what is happening now but what will happen in the future. This government needs to make investments and put forward some ideas that are going to help this province to grow and prosper in the future.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: Point of order.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: In the last two days in my family we lost two of my cousins, and I just wanted to acknowledge them in the House. Bob Glover was a welder at General Motors for over 30 years and one of many, many generations of Glovers who worked at General Motors in Oshawa. My other cousin, Sue Wood from Uxbridge, also passed away of cancer after a five-year struggle. Maya Angelou said that you will always remember how people make you feel. Sue Wood was one of those people who made everyone who came into her presence feel really wonderful.

Thank you for allowing me to make this statement.

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

Mr. Stephen Lecce: Madam Speaker, first off, let me offer my condolences to the member from Spadina–Fort York—

Interjection: On behalf of all of us.

Mr. Stephen Lecce:—on behalf of all members of this House.

I’m here with a great level of excitement to speak about restoring Ontario’s competitive advantage, which we believe this legislation will do.

I want to help define the problem for the members opposite, who seem to believe that the regulatory burden facing our job creators in this province, small and large, is reasonable.

In the last decade, between roughly 2003 and 2009, the province of Ontario lost, net, 300,000 manufacturing jobs. The member from St. Paul’s said that she is pro-union. Overwhelmingly, 300,000 blue-collar, well-paid union jobs were lost under the watch of the former government.

The question I have for members opposite, when the GDP per capita as a measure of productivity ranks us 46th out of 64 on the continent when it comes to jurisdictions to invest in, and when we know, as Conservatives, that you cannot tax yourself to prosperity—this is a fundamental contrast point between members on the left and those on the centre-right who believe that the only way to create jobs, the only way to incent industry to move to Ontario, the only way to protect the competitive advantage that we have for industry, is to cut taxes, cut regulations, and make this province open for business and open for jobs.

Madam Speaker, we know that the Premier of Ontario is in Washington, DC, today, as we speak, meeting with the ambassador from the United States, Ambassador Craft, meeting with the Canadian American Business Council, meeting with leaders in the United States administration, with a singular purpose: to help promote the Ontario advantage, to help ensure people know that it’s this economy that is growing steadily—this economy that has the greatest immigration rates in the country, the greatest GDP growth in the country. We want to promote that advantage. We want to promote the fact that we have the most talented workforce in the OECD. We want to promote the fact that we are focused on, from an education perspective, ensuring that young people actually enter the skilled trades, so that we can help fill the labour shortages that exist within our economy.

Madam Speaker, the Premier of Ontario is abroad to help promote our province, to ensure that we actually live up to the standard, as public officials, to create jobs for our young people and for every one of our constituents. He is promoting a single message: that nine million jobs south of the border depend on the Canada-US relationship, and that the second-largest trading partner with the US is this province and country. He has spoken to governors. He has spoken to the ambassador. He has spoken to the administration. He spoke with Ambassador Craft today to make that message.

We can be platitudinous in suggesting we are pro-jobs, but when it comes to voting, our records speak for themselves. There are two political parties in this Legislature—one officially and one unofficially, the New Democrats and the Liberals—who have taken a steadfast policy of promoting big government and, by extension, ultimately promoting jobs in the United States. If we want to protect those jobs in this province, we have to ensure that we have a competitive advantage. It is as simple as that.

Do not take it from me. Speak to the chambers in your local municipalities. Speak to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce's Rocco Rossi. Speak to the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters association, whom I've met with. I met with the OCC, the Ontario chamber, just days ago, and I want to advise some of my members opposite of what that report stated.

The report notes that confidence in Ontario has improved—in their economic report unveiled just this Tuesday. I was proud, on behalf of the government, to be part of the panel to discuss this with the chamber. It is up 7%, accompanied by a 20% drop in negative sentiment. I have to ask myself: I wonder what has changed year over year. Yes, it is a new government. It is new policies. It is a pro-business, pro-jobs, pro-worker government that is working steadfast from day one to create that advantage. Businesses are gaining confidence in themselves at a rate of a 7% increase, a dramatic increase from last year, when the former Liberals were in power.

Madam Speaker, we know that we're in a period of inflection in our economy. We realize that global economists are suggesting that there can be a recession in one or two years. This is what the major economists and banks are suggesting. While I do not want that for our economy or for the global economy, we have to be prepared. We have to inculcate our economy. We have to take the requisite actions today to have the fiscal room, both from a deficit and a debt perspective, but also from the regulatory and tax perspective, to make sure that those job creators don't flow south. Some 300,000 jobs have flown south.

Since we've been in power, since we've had the privilege to serve the people of this province, the CFIB, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, put out

a report card. They suggested that the highest grade ever recorded in red tape reduction was awarded to this Premier, to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, to every member of this cabinet.

Madam Speaker, that does not happen because they woke up on the right side of the bed that day. It happened because the government of Ontario, the new government of Ontario under Premier Doug Ford, has a mission to reduce taxes. While there was a walk-in heckle taking place in this House, I noticed a member opposite suggesting otherwise.

Madam Speaker, when they were in power, the last grade they got was a C+. My parents—God bless them, immigrant parents—wouldn't have been happy with a C+. I know they wanted something better.

So we came into power with a plan to reduce regs, and we've done that. We have done that, and we are continuing to do that. The competitiveness act builds upon that.

When I hear members opposite—hailing from a very proud auto community yourself, Madam Speaker—when 100,000 men and women every single day wake up in this province to work in the auto sector—you are not going to keep the remaining auto jobs in the province if we believe that more regulations, more than 380,000—we're more regulated than the province of British Columbia, the New Democratic province of British Columbia, I might add. We're more regulated than the state of California, more regulated than the New Democratic province of Alberta.

If this is not suggesting to members opposite that there's a problem, a problem we may agree with, and maybe we choose policy prescriptions that are different—Madam Speaker, we can't even agree on a problem definition at this point.

The New Democrats have always been for more regulations. They've always been for more taxes, and of course they doubled the debt when they were last in power.

Let us focus on the bill before us. The Premier is in the United States. He is promoting this bill. He is promoting the open-for-business bill. He is promoting every single act we have done to cut taxes, with a mission to cut the corporate income tax rate.

Madam Speaker, members opposite will say that cutting corporate income tax rates will perhaps create structural deficits. I'm proud to report that when we cut corporate income taxes federally, we grew revenues and we helped our small businesses. We protected jobs.

We're going to grow this economy every step of the way, because the province of Ontario is open for business.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I apologize for interrupting the member, but this House stands adjourned until 10:30 a.m. on Monday, February 25, 2019.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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