

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 73

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N° 73

1st Session
42nd Parliament

Monday
4 March 2019

1^{re} session
42^e législature

Lundi
4 mars 2019

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Todd Decker

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



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

ISSN 1180-2987

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 4 March 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 4 mars 2019

The House met at 1030.

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

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I wish to acknowledge this territory as a traditional gathering place for many Indigenous nations, most recently the Mississaugas of the New Credit.

This being the first sitting Monday of the month, we are delighted to be joined in the House today in the Speaker's gallery by the Bur Oak Secondary School choir from the riding of Markham–Unionville to sing O Canada with us. Please continue to stand and join them in the singing of our national anthem.

Singing of O Canada.

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

M. Guy Bourgoïn: Je voudrais souhaiter la bienvenue à Queen's Park à l'Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'Ontario, à l'Association des directions et des directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes, à l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens, à l'Association des gestionnaires de l'éducation franco-ontarienne, à l'Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques, à l'Association francophone à l'éducation des services à l'enfance de l'Ontario, au Centre de leadership et d'évaluation, au Centre franco-ontarien de ressources pédagogiques, à l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, et aux Parents partenaires en éducation. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

Hon. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome a guest, Jackson Wiltshire, a Trent University student in Peterborough who hails from Bancroft. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am very pleased to welcome to the Legislature a visitor from my riding. Dustin Allen has come to join us today. Welcome to the Legislature, Dusty.

M^{me} Gila Martow: Je veux donner un accueil très chaleureux à tous les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes et à tous les conseils qui sont ici aujourd'hui.

Aussi, il y a une réception à Hart House à 14 h cet après-midi dans la salle de musique.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I would like to welcome Lakehead University's president, Moira McPherson, and director of government relations Richard Longtin to the House.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I have the pleasure of introducing two guests to the Legislature today. I'd like to

introduce Nicole Crawford, the proud mother of one of our pages, Michelle Crawford, and owner of Navroc, an OSC-licensed portfolio management company; and Salvatore Benedetto, owner of York West Developments, a commercial and residential landlord in the city of Toronto. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Je sais qu'ils ont été nommés, mais au nom du caucus libéral, j'aimerais accueillir ici les groupes pour la réception communauté franco-ontarienne qui sont avec nous. Je ne ferai pas encore la liste de tous les groupes, mais plus particulièrement, j'aimerais souligner la présence des conseillers scolaires élus Sylvie Landry, Denis Chartrand, Jean Lemay et Langis Dion, et aussi, des élus associatifs Carol Jolin, Rémi Sabourin, Steeve Carrier et Sylvie Gravelle. On voudrait vous remercier de votre présence ici. C'est certain qu'on vous soutient. Merci beaucoup.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I would like to say bonjour and bienvenue to all of our francophone education partners who are here today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M. Joel Harden: Je suis très heureux d'être ici et de me lever pour donner mon appui à nos amis francophones. Je suis heureux de vous voir aujourd'hui, et heureux de notre réunion cet après-midi. Particulièrement, à Carol Jolin, le président de l'AFO : bienvenue à la salle du peuple.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to introduce guests of ours this morning in the persons of the Seamless Canada delegation: Lieutenant-General Charles Lamarre, Brigadier-General Steven Whelan and Lieutenant Alex Metaxas-Mariatos. They are joined by Gregory Legace. They are here as part of Seamless Canada, an institution that the Legislature as a whole is supporting.

Mr. Deepak Anand: I would like to welcome to the Legislature, from K-Bro Linen Systems—with 1,600 employees in Canada and an office in my riding of Mississauga–Malton—Mr. Sean Curtis, Linda McCurdy, Michael Szymanski, Kevin Stephenson, Mark Halberstadt and Celine Chang. Thank you, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Billy Pang: Today I have the pleasure of having two schools from my riding of Markham–Unionville come to the Legislature today. The first one is Bur Oak Secondary; they performed the national anthem earlier. I'd also like to welcome another school, which is Unionville Montessori school.

I love to see my constituents at the Legislature, and I hope they have a wonderful day.

Mr. Will Bouma: It gives me great pleasure to welcome a couple of friends to the House today: Tom Waldschmidt, a fire prevention officer for the county of Brant,

and his wife, Nancy; and also Randy Papple, a just-retired paramedic with County of Brant Ambulance Services, and his wife, Diane.

I don't want to take anything away from my member's statement this afternoon, but on behalf of this House, thank you for your service.

Ms. Jill Dunlop: The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan already introduced our guest, but I would like to as well, since Lakehead University has a campus in Orillia in my riding of Simcoe North: Dr. Moira McPherson, the president and vice-chancellor, and Richard Longtin, the government relations director.

1040

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to welcome Ian Heikoop and Gary Brown, two constituents from my riding of Oxford, to watch question period today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Stan Cho: Good morning. It's my privilege to introduce to the House some wonderful constituents, fellow Willowdalers Adrian Miedema, Suanne Miedema and Steve Boyle. Welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I would like to introduce my friend Charles Hookimaw, from Attawapiskat First Nation, and Michael Philbin and Steve Carrier from my riding of Nipissing.

Mr. Dave Smith: I'd like to welcome two members of Junior Achievement: John McNutt and former mayor Paul Ayotte.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I, too, would like to welcome Jane Eisbrenner and all of the Junior Achievements from across the province that are joining us today at Queen's Park. I'd invite all members to join us after question period for a reception in room 228.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I bring greetings to constituent and Dunnville resident Richard Longtin—he has been introduced before—with Lakehead University.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): In the Speaker's gallery this morning is the family of today's page captain, Siya Aggarwal, from Wellington–Halton Hills: her mother, Salonee Aggarwal; her father, Neeraj Aggarwal; brother, Prassan Aggarwal; uncle, Nitesh Gupta; and grandmother Santosh Kumar. Welcome to Queen's Park. I'm delighted to have you here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question is to the Acting Premier. During the last election campaign, the Premier pledged that not a single job would be lost as he implemented his cuts for Ontario. Parents of children in our public schools are wondering this week, does the Acting Premier believe that the Premier meant a word of that?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Deputy Premier. It's my pleasure to stand in the House today

and say, unequivocally, straightforward, straight from the heart, that there are going to be no front-line cuts under the Ford government.

The fearmongering that this opposition party is trying to generate is just disgusting, quite frankly, Speaker. We are working with our school boards, and we're being very responsible inasmuch as, year after year, under the Liberal administration, we've recognized that there was so much waste affecting the classroom, the learning environment, in every school across this province. We're standing up and saying that we are following through on our campaign promise. We are standing with our Premier and collectively, as a team, we are ensuring that there will be no front-line job losses.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What the minister calls "fearmongering" we call "vigilance of a fierce official opposition."

Parents were quite disturbed this week by news that the Ford government is calling on school boards to freeze new hiring. School boards are warning parents to prepare for cuts, for higher class sizes, for less support for their kids and for layoffs.

Can the Deputy Premier explain to us how any of these cuts will benefit our children?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: The Ford government, the PC government of Ontario, is ensuring that every precious tax dollar that we have in this province is going to be invested in such a way that the learning environment and the opportunities for students to learn and move forward and feel confident about the career path they choose is second to none. This is something that not only am I dedicated to or the Premier is dedicated to, but I can tell you that the entire PC team is dedicated to as well, in terms of government. Our PC caucus and our government is absolutely taking positive strides to make sure that our students are going to be provided with a safe and supportive learning environment.

We're doing the responsible thing. We need to work with our school boards. That's why a planning memo was sent out last week to let them know, in terms of a good flow of communication, what our plans are, and I will be pleased to continue to speak about this.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, it may be news to the Minister of Education, but safe and supportive learning environments require teachers, ECEs and other supports for students.

As a result of Liberal neglect, schools are already saying that they're going to struggle next year. Now, thanks to this government, schools are saying that they're unprepared for the influx of children who are losing autism supports; they don't know what curriculum they'll be teaching; and now the government has warned them not to fill staff positions. Why is the government telling our schools not to fill vacancies, unless they're planning to axe those positions and force cuts in the classrooms?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Speaker, quite frankly, we need to ensure that we have the right teachers in the right

place in the right classrooms so that our students are building their skills, and that ECEs and the entire education worker teams are in the right place, in the right classrooms, so that we can ensure our students have confidence. If anyone disagrees with that, quite frankly, they don't care about students in Ontario.

The fact of the matter is, I'm prepared to share—and I'll send this over to the Leader of the Opposition—the planning memo that we sent out to our boards of education as well as our chairs, because I think it's very important that she understands and sees clearly what we're working towards.

Our school boards were advised to defer the annual processes of filling vacancies for retirement and other leaves related to teachers and other staff until the Minister of Education provides an update to the sector on or before March 15. I'll send this over to the Leader of the Opposition for her information.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Deputy Premier. Families are also worried about the state of their health care system. In the light of the 40 nursing jobs that were cut at the Grand River Hospital in Kitchener just last week or the 60 nursing jobs cut from the Sudbury hospital late last year, will the Deputy Premier be willing to repeat the Premier's pledge that not a single job will be lost in the health care sector?

Hon. Christine Elliott: As we indicated when we announced the plan last week, our goal is to make sure that we centre care around patients and that patients receive that connected care as they move through the transitions in their health care journey. We want to make sure there are more people on the front line in this new, redeveloped health care system that's been years in the making.

We know we have critical strains on our system right now. Everyone can see that. We have over 30,000 people waiting for a long-term-care bed; 1,000 people every single day are being treated in hospital hallways and storage rooms; and there's thousands and thousands of people who aren't receiving the mental health and addiction care they need.

That's the goal of our plan: to make sure that we correct those problems in our system, but truly connected around the patient, and to make sure there is better, more timely patient care as a result.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There's no doubt that the Liberals left our health care system hanging by a thread, but the firing of 100 nurses in a couple months' time certainly is not going to make things better.

Hospitals in Kitchener and Sudbury are just some of the many that are facing budget shortfalls this year. As the Minister of Health talks about her new mega-agency, she can't—or won't—tell patients how many jobs will be lost. Is she at least ready to admit that more than one single job will be lost?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I can tell the leader of the official opposition that we are

working with the hospital in Sudbury as well as with the Grand River Hospital to understand what their specific concerns are and financial pressures that they're under because we want to preserve that front-line care. So that conversation is ongoing with the Ministry of Health and with those hospitals.

But I can tell you that specifically with respect to this plan, it has been well received by health care providers as well as by patients. The Ontario Medical Association is supportive. The Ontario Hospital Association, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario and Home Care Ontario are enthusiastic about these changes because they know it's transformational change we need. It's not going to be a few changes around the edges of our health care system that's going to bring about the results we need. We need to have this change from the ground up, with local providers providing that care for the patients—

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Final supplementary?

1050

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, families are seeing exactly what the priorities of this government are, whether it's front-line nurses losing jobs in local hospitals, or teachers and education workers disappearing from our classrooms. The only jobs the Premier is protecting are the tickets on the gravy train that he gives to his friends and Tory insiders. Those are the only jobs that are protected.

But the Ontario families who couldn't afford the over-\$1,200 tickets for the Premier's fundraiser want to know: How many teachers and nurses will the Ford government be firing?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Mr. Speaker, again, I can say to the Leader of the Opposition, through you, that that is a whole mixture of issues you're bringing up there. But to address what I believe is your question about teachers and nurses, we are strengthening our education system. We are putting more resources on the front line. The Minister of Education is centring on the needs of the students in our school system.

As far as my role as Minister of Health, I am centring on the needs of patients in this province, what patients need. Patients are not happy with our current system. They are receiving disjointed, disconnected care. We want to connect them to their health care system and allow them to know that regardless of their health care needs throughout their lives, their health care system is going to be there for them and be able to respond to their needs.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Deputy Premier, but I can tell you, whether you're a patient or whether you're a student, you need a front-line worker to help make sure that your needs are met. That's what you need.

Type 2 spinal muscular atrophy is a rare degenerative disorder that destroys the body's muscles. In many cases, the disorder is fatal. Children with less severe versions

may never crawl or walk, and over time lose the ability to do things as basic as standing, turning over in bed, and lifting food to their mouths.

Last week, the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health recommended expanded public coverage for the drug Spinraza for children under 12 to treat this disorder. Will our province be acting on that recommendation, Speaker?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I do thank the leader of the official opposition for this question. This is a very serious issue. I have heard from a number of parents specifically whose children are affected by this spinal muscular atrophy, and Spinraza, I know, looks to be a very promising way to deal with it. I've been following it. But the safety, of course, of patients is our primary concern. I can tell you that, right now, it is continuing to go through the review to make sure that it is both going to be safe and also going to be effective. We are currently waiting for the final funding recommendation from the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in the final health review of Spinraza.

So, while we all want to make sure that it comes on board as quickly as possible, we must go through these safety precautions and receive these recommendations before we can allow for it to be available to patients.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, what parents want to hear is a definitive answer from this minister.

The Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health recommended expanded public coverage for the drug Spinraza. The drug is offering hope to desperate parents but is simply too expensive for them to afford. Treatments run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. No parent should be in a position of knowing that the treatment is out there but watching their child suffer because their bank account isn't big enough to pay for the drugs. When will this province agree to fund Spinraza?

Hon. Christine Elliott: First of all, I would say to the leader of the official opposition, it's not about the cost of it. If someone needs a medication in Ontario, we want to make sure that they are going to be able to receive it and not have to pay for it out of pocket, because we know that many families are simply not going to be able to do that. If they can't, they should still have access to it.

As the leader of the official opposition also knows, there are many steps that need to be taken before a drug can be finally approved. So I can clearly say that, right now, we are waiting for the final recommendation from the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health, in their health review of Spinraza. I am as anxious as anyone else here for that review to be completed, but it is one of the steps that we need to take to make sure it is going to be clinically safe as well as clinically effective.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Donna Skelly: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Our government made a campaign promise to get the people of Ontario moving by improving and

expanding our current public transit system. As the Minister of Transportation has shared with the House on many occasions, we have several projects already under way, with the TTC upload and GO service expansions. I look forward to continuing to hear more about the upload and future service expansions.

The previous government, supported by the NDP, had 15 years to improve our current transit system, but, as it always seems with the members opposite, there was a lot of talk and very little action. Will the Minister of Transportation share with the House other projects that our government for the people has undertaken to improve transit right across the province?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: I would like to thank the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook for that great question and, really, for working on the improvement of transit across the entire region.

Let me be the first to tell the House here today that last week I announced that, as of March 9, all children 12 and under can ride free on GO Transit.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of my PC colleagues for their advocacy on this issue. #KidsRideFree allows families to keep more money in their own pockets when commuting with their children to work, school, home, or for a family outing.

Mr. Speaker, our government for the people is committed to putting families first and making life more affordable by introducing programs like #KidsRideFree. This announcement is about giving families more options when travelling and will allow families to spend more quality time together on a GO train or bus. This means real savings for families and customers. I look forward to sharing more in my supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Donna Skelly: Back to the Minister of Transportation: I'm really thrilled that our government has implemented the #KidsRideFree program on GO Transit. This is absolutely great news for the people of Ontario and for the residents in my riding of Flamborough–Glanbrook, who are pleased to learn about these exciting new changes.

Ontarians work hard every single day, day in and day out, to provide for their families. Our government is committed to ensuring that families are able to keep more money in their pockets, in addition to spending more time with their loved ones. Making transit an easier and more affordable choice for parents cuts through gridlock by helping to get traffic off of our roads.

Our government believes that public transit is vital to Ontario's quality of life. Can the Minister of Transportation share with the House more information on this great program?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Again, thanks for that question from the member. Families across the GTHA can take this opportunity to explore the many activities that are close to GO stations. Free travel for kids on GO Transit aligns fares with the TTC and UP Express. This is another step to integrate transit across the GTHA.

It's good to know that this program is already being supported by other members of the Legislature. Even the

member from Don Valley East has tweeted his support for this announcement. Thank you very much for that support. Sometimes, it's good to support a good policy and not to oppose just to oppose.

In the last six months, our government for the people has increased service throughout the GO network. We've added more than 200 new weekly train trips on the Lakeshore East and West GO train lines, more trips between Toronto and Kitchener, and daily commuter service between Toronto and Niagara Falls. For the first time ever, we're way ahead of schedule as we expand GO Transit.

Stay tuned for more to come, because our government is on the move. We're expanding GO Transit. We're integrating the transit systems—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The House will come to order.

Start the clock. Next question.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is for the Acting Premier. The disastrous Conservative changes to the autism program are already creating chaos. Therapy providers are considering layoffs and wondering how they can ethically provide services within the new budgets. School boards are raising the alarm. They don't have the resources to serve the influx of autistic children. Families are deciding if they have to sell their homes or move to other provinces to get needs-based services.

1100

Will the Acting Premier tell us how much chaos we must all endure before the Premier recognizes that this is a bad plan and directs the minister to try again?

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Deputy Premier. I appreciate the opportunity to stand in this House and to talk about our motivation to clear the wait-list in the next 18 months of the 23,000 children who are languishing on that wait-list.

I was reviewing over the weekend some of the comments that have been made in this House over the years on this particular file. On November 4, 2015, a colleague in this House said, "Families have made plea after plea to this minister to deal with the wait-list, to ensure that kids are getting the supports they need. Parents and kids have had enough. They've had enough excuses; they've had enough talk; they've had enough studies; they've had enough panels. Now is the time for action." The question ends with "Will the Acting Premier instruct the minister to immediately end wait-lists for children with autism?" That was the member from Hamilton Mountain.

This government has decided we are going to clear the wait-list. Why is that not good enough for that member today when it was good enough for that member in 2015?

Interjections.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: The members opposite know that this autism plan is wrong. Will they give the minister standing ovations for destroying families of children with autism?

They lead families on privately, giving them false hope that the government is on their side. Last Friday, I received a letter from a constituent of the member from Carleton. She had been told that her member was on her side and she shared her concerns about the recent changes. But when she shared this on Facebook, the member quietly reached out and asked her to change the post. With the reports of the Big Brother atmosphere of obedience across the aisle, I can see why.

Will the Acting Premier tell us, does the Conservative caucus actually support the new autism program or is it being forced into supporting it mandatorily?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: This is a government that has made a commitment to clear the wait-list. I don't know why they can't take yes for an answer. They were for a direct funding model until they weren't. They were for clearing the wait-list until they weren't. They were for regulating service providers until they weren't. This is an opposition party that has become a professional protest movement and will continue to use parents of children with autism as pawns.

I will tell you, Speaker, we are making sure that we are doubling our investment into diagnostic hubs—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: —to ensure that children with autism are diagnosed more quickly. We are making sure that we are going to a direct funding model so parents will have choices on how to best support their children. We are going to ensure upwards of \$140,000 will be made available for the childhood budget. But what I don't understand is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the minister. The opposition must come to order and allow the minister to respond to the question that came from the opposition side. I need to be able to hear the minister.

I ask the minister to conclude her response.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, it's clear that the NDP does not have a plan. It is clear that they don't have a costing of it. They had a \$3-billion hole in their budget. I'll take no lessons from them on how to make sure that we support children with autism in this province.

RESPONSABILITÉ FINANCIÈRE

M^{me} Gila Martow: J'ai une question pour le Conseil du Trésor. Monsieur le Président, le gouvernement précédent n'a rien fait pour protéger les contribuables ontariens.

My constituents are concerned about how the ballooning debt and wasteful spending of the Liberals will impact the province.

Nous avons promis aux Ontariens de rétablir la confiance et la responsabilité du gouvernement. C'est exactement ce que nous faisons. Et voici ce que nous avons fait jusqu'à présent : introduit des restrictions de dépenses à travers le gouvernement, examiné les dépenses du gouvernement ligne par ligne, et lancé un examen de toutes les agences gouvernementales.

Can the President of the Treasury Board please inform this House of what other actions the government is taking to restore trust and accountability?

L'hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Merci à ma collègue pour cette question excellente. Pendant 15 ans, les libéraux ont pratiquement ignoré les recommandations de la vérificatrice générale. C'est pourquoi, l'année dernière, j'ai annoncé la création du premier comité d'audit et de responsabilité dans l'Ontario. Ce comité a l'objectif de s'appuyer sur le travail indépendant effectué par la vérificatrice générale, de rétablir la responsabilité, de réduire le gaspillage et de mettre en oeuvre les recommandations formulées par la vérificatrice générale.

Comme la chef de l'opposition l'a déclaré en 2014 : « Assurer la stabilité financière de notre province n'est pas une question partisane. » Monsieur le Président, pour une fois, nous sommes d'accord.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

M^{me} Gila Martow: Merci au président du Conseil du Trésor pour cette réponse. Monsieur le Président, les Ontariens et les Ontariennes s'inquiètent de l'augmentation des paiements d'intérêts sur la dette de l'Ontario sous les libéraux. En fait, l'Ontario dépense actuellement 12,5 milliards de dollars par an en intérêts sur notre dette. Chaque dollar d'argent gaspillé en intérêt est un dollar qui ne peut pas aller aux écoles, aux hôpitaux et aux transports en commun.

Voici ce que le Bureau du directeur de la responsabilité financière de l'Ontario a déclaré dans son dernier rapport : « L'Ontario se classait au deuxième rang des niveaux d'endettement par habitant au Canada ... À l'avenir, des déficits plus grands aggraveraient encore la situation financière de l'Ontario. »

Cela est tout simplement inacceptable. Le président du Conseil du Trésor peut-il dire à cette Chambre ce que fait le gouvernement pour diminuer notre dette?

L'hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Merci encore à ma collègue pour cette question excellente. Comme indiqué dans les finances du troisième trimestre, le gouvernement prévoit un déficit de 13,5 milliards de dollars, contre 15 milliards de dollars laissés à nous par les libéraux.

Depuis la formation du gouvernement, mes collègues et moi avons travaillé avec diligence pour que l'Ontario s'engage sur la voie suivante : rétablir la crédibilité budgétaire, préserver les services essentiels tels que la santé et l'éducation, et soutenir les familles et les entreprises.

Monsieur le Président, il est essentiel de remédier aux dommages fiscaux causés par le gouvernement précédent. C'est la raison pour laquelle nous tiendrons notre promesse aux Ontariens, et nous continuerons de combattre la dette laissée par le gouvernement précédent.

INDIGENOUS HEALTH CARE

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Cat Lake First Nation has asked for housing and health emergency relief. They declared a state of emergency back on January 16 due to black mould in most of their homes. The resulting illnesses are so serious that children are being medevacked out of the community. Since then, a Cat Lake First Nation woman has died.

Chief Keewaykapow has requested 10 to 14 housing units so that residents can be removed from the contaminated houses. There are only weeks left before the winter road closes to get the promised housing supplies in. Will this government provide the immediate temporary housing that Minister Rickford said he would provide several weeks ago?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you to the member for the question. The safety and well-being of a First Nation community that declares a social or infrastructure emergency is of great concern to this government. Of course, as the minister said last week, we are saddened to hear about the loss of Nashie Oombash from Cat Lake First Nation and we offer our heartfelt condolences to Nashie's family and to the entire community in Cat Lake.

Member, we know that the minister has personally reached out to Matthew Keewaykapow to discuss how the province may be able to support the community during this difficult time.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Last week, this government claimed that it funded an infectious disease specialist to conduct a full medical assessment of the community and that additional nurses have been deployed in the community. I spoke with the chief. Medical specialists were sent, but by the federal government, and there are no additional nurses.

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Will this government stop playing games with the lives and the health of the children and families of Cat Lake and send up the emergency health team that the community so desperately needs now?

Interjections.

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

Minister.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you again for the supplementary question on this important issue. When a social emergency is declared, the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs plays a coordinating role in efficiently responding to these emergencies.

We do know that while the provision of housing on reserves remains the responsibility of the federal government, we have reached out to the community to offer Ontario's full support.

Speaker, as I said in the first question, the safety and well-being of our First Nations communities that declare a social or infrastructure emergency is of great concern and great importance to this government. I do know that

Minister Rickford has personally reached out to Chief Matthew Keewaykapow.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: My question is to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Almost everyone strongly dislikes the minister's proposed changes to the Ontario Autism Program. Even parents who were once supportive have walked away. They have walked away from this minister and from the chaos she is imposing on families and schools in Ontario.

They know that at the end of September, this minister directed service providers to stop the intake of children with autism. They know that she directed service providers to hide her scheme from parents. And they know that her directive caused a huge spike in the wait-list.

My question is this: Was the minister aware that her secret directive would inflate the wait-list?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, I'm going to respond directly to that disgraceful allegation. That is not true. It is not only untrue; it's factually incorrect, as my deputy minister pointed out. That is absolutely artificial.

What I can tell you, and what that member should understand, is that for 15 long years, they continued to put forward multiple programs that ignored many children in this province. When her government was last in office, this time last year, three out of four children in the province of Ontario who required support from their Ontario government were denied it.

They brought forward a program that was bankrupt and broke, and we had to fix it. We have gone to a direct funding model, which is what many people have wanted. We have also gone to more parental choice, because we recognize that ABA therapy may not work for all children, which is why we're investing in technological aids, caregiver training and respite support. We're also making sure that we double the investment in diagnostic hubs, just like the one in our city at CHEO.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Back to the minister: The minister can throw around all the insults she likes, but parents are desperate for more information. They have lost confidence and trust in her.

The complete lack of transparency on this file is shocking. Did the minister even consider any other options? Certainly, there were better options than this. Were options like moving the autism program to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care considered—an option supported by important groups like Autism Ontario and Autism Canada? But then again, the minister and this government have a habit of ignoring sound advice from stakeholder groups.

The question is simple: Was taking the Ontario Autism Program away from this minister and her ministry an option? If not, why not?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, it takes a lot of nerve for an Ontario Liberal MPP to stand up in this House and talk about autism and defend what they did over the past

15 years to ignore 23,000 children who required support from their Ontario government.

I will take no lessons from any member of the Liberal caucus. They were handed a very strong message from the public on June 7, 2018, when they were reduced from a majority government to seven independent seats. If anyone has lost the confidence of the people of this province, it is the Ontario Liberal Party. I will not stand here and take any advice on any program, whether that's in my ministry or any other ministry, from that government. I watched them, and they should be ashamed of themselves for ignoring 23,000 children.

Some 75% of the kids in this province with autism were denied support by the Ontario Liberal government. This government is changing that. We're going to a direct funding model. We're clearing the wait-list, we're investing in diagnostic hubs and we're going to make sure that, 18 months from now, that wait-list is cleared so we can ensure early intervention.

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} Goldie Ghamari: Ma question est pour la ministre des Affaires francophones. Notre gouvernement pour la population veille à la préservation et au développement des acquis culturels des Franco-Ontariennes et Franco-Ontariens, notamment dans le domaine de l'éducation.

En tant que gouvernement, nous sommes déterminés à participer au développement des communautés francophones. Nous savons qu'il y a plus de 100 000 étudiants francophones dans les écoles de langue française, et plus d'un million d'étudiants inscrits aux programmes de français langue seconde dans la province.

Est-ce que la ministre des Affaires francophones peut informer cette Chambre du travail que notre gouvernement fait pour la communauté francophone de l'Ontario en ce qui a trait aux études et à la formation en français dans la province?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Je remercie ma collègue pour sa question. L'Ontario français, sa culture et son avenir nous sont chers, et notre appui est constant dans une multitude de domaines, dont l'éducation, laquelle a bien sûr un rôle clé à jouer.

Nous avons investi, notre gouvernement—et ma collègue la ministre de l'Éducation peut en attester—1,7 milliard de dollars pour appuyer les programmes d'éducation en langue française. Cela comprend 23,5 millions de dollars pour l'éducation en langue française, versés dans les 12 commissions scolaires de langue française ou les 60 de langue anglaise, en partenariat avec le gouvernement fédéral, pour des activités de mobilisation des étudiants et des parents, des activités de développement professionnel, des cours et des services de devoirs en ligne, des manuels de cours et des ressources pour les enseignants.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

M^{me} Goldie Ghamari: Est-ce que la ministre des Affaires francophones peut nous donner d'autres informations sur l'action de son ministère pour appuyer les services de première ligne en éducation dans les communautés francophones?

L'hon. Caroline Mulroney: Tout d'abord, monsieur le Président, je veux préciser que nous mettons bon ordre dans nos finances publiques, car nous devons composer avec la situation budgétaire difficile que nous a laissée l'ancien gouvernement libéral après 15 années de mauvaise gestion et 15 milliards de dollars en déficit annuel.

En même temps, nous appuyons l'éducation francophone et nous entendons, comme gouvernement, de continuer de veiller aux intérêts des Franco-Ontariennes et des Franco-Ontariens, en rappelant au gouvernement fédéral son sous-investissement en matière d'appui aux francophones. En effet, le gouvernement fédéral n'accorde que 2,78 \$ par francophone pour ce qui est des programmes en Ontario, alors qu'il accorde 35 \$ par francophone en Manitoba et 7 \$ au Nouveau-Brunswick.

Malgré l'investissement du fédéral en éducation, il est temps que le gouvernement fédéral fasse sa juste part en ce qui a trait au financement des francophones en Ontario, en ce qui concerne l'entente Canada-Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Merci. Next question.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is for the Minister of Education. In a letter sent on Friday, three associations representing Ontario's principals and vice-principals joined the chorus of educators, parents and families pleading with the minister to take action on school supports for children with autism spectrum disorder. They point to the dire limitations of the current funding envelope to address the needs of these students, and they raise serious concerns about staffing, supports and the safety of students with ASD.

Speaker, there is less than a month before children with autism spectrum disorder lose access to all essential therapies. Will the minister stop hiding behind already inadequate special education funding and show us a plan to support kids with ASD in schools?

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Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I stand today saying that I'm very pleased with the manner in which my ministry is addressing this situation very, very seriously. Speaker, we got ahead of this. Again, we came out with our Bill 48. We extended the pilot program that was in place because we knew we needed to learn more in terms of how we can best support children with autism in our classrooms in a safe and supportive way. That pilot project that we extended offered targeted EA training. We also provided dedicated space for autism services through an external ABA analyst right on-site. Also, during the pilot, we added funding for school boards to hire board-certified behaviour analysts, and we currently have an external evaluator looking through and evaluating what worked and what didn't.

We're taking great steps to making sure that, as we move forward, our classrooms in Ontario are safe and supportive for every student.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Marit Stiles: A pilot project in a couple of schools across this province is not going to address the serious problems that children with autism are going to have when

they hit our schools. Children with autism and their families deserve so much better than that answer.

This weekend, the chair of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board told the CBC that a lack of communication between various ministries and school boards is a serious concern. Across the province, school officials are fielding panicked calls from parents and scrambling to find qualified staff to support kids who are being abruptly kicked off their autism therapies.

So far, the only announcement the minister has made is one that came from her deputy minister in the dead of night on a Thursday, saying that they are going to be freezing school hirings. A late-night, one-page memo saying, "We'll get back to you later," does nothing to give parents confidence in her abilities.

Speaker, what's it going to take for this minister to do her job and show up for these kids?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: This ministry, under the leadership of Doug Ford and myself, is showing up for students across Ontario every single day. I stand up against any fearmongering that any member of the opposition offers to give, because it does nothing but detract.

Speaker, we are moving forward with a very thoughtful and purposeful plan, and the realities are that we are working closely with our school boards. They're our partners in making sure that we clean up the mess that we inherited from the Liberal administration.

I look forward to continuing to work with our school boards and with our parents as we roll out this plan. Again, Speaker, I can't stress enough that we are working very, very closely and in full communication with our school boards so there are no surprises as we support safe and supportive schools and, yes, supportive classrooms across Ontario.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Daryl Kramp: My question today is to our experienced, attentive and responsive Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Last month, the minister announced that this government introduced changes to the Ontario Wildlife Damage Compensation Program. The previous government had made changes to that program that just didn't make any sense at all for our farmers. The current process forces farmers to jump through many, many administrative hoops just to prove that they've lost their livestock to predation, something that is often difficult to control, but painfully obvious to anybody with a bit of common sense.

Mr. Speaker, this government supports our farmers. We trust our farmers. We want to make life easier and more affordable for our farmers. So would the minister please tell us how these new updates to the program will work for the eligible farmers when they lose their livestock to predators?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I thank the member for Hastings-Lennox and Addington for this important question. Our government has been listening to livestock farmers across the province, and as a result we are reducing regulatory burdens and making life easier for farmers who experience livestock losses beyond their control.

In partnership with the federal government, our government has made the following changes to the program:

We are allowing for more ways to provide sufficient evidence to prove wildlife predation.

We are paving a way for a more independent and transparent appeal process.

We will be providing better training for municipal investigators to assess predation.

We are working on compensation that better reflects market prices.

Reducing unnecessary red tape and providing farmers the tools they need to stay in business is only one of the ways this government is supporting those who are feeding our province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Certainly, I thank the minister for his attention, his answer and his commitment to improving this program. I'm pleased and proud to hear that our government's updates to this program support fair compensation for eligible losses. Like many of my colleagues, I have heard from many, many livestock farmers in our ridings, and they have been vocal that the changes were needed to make the process of getting compensation clearer, simpler and more transparent for our farmers.

Our government has consulted with this sector, and the input we have received from those who use the program was valuable to ensure that these new updates that we make to this program are meaningful, effective and, most importantly, actually work for the farmers.

Can the minister please tell us what he has personally heard from the livestock farmers about the changes to this program and how effective they will be?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I thank the member for the supplementary question. While travelling across the province, I was pleased to gather input from so many of our livestock farmers on the outdated, inefficient methods put in place by the previous government. As a result, we were able to directly use stakeholder input to make improvements to help with the exact problems that our farmers face daily on the ground.

In response to the changes, the Ontario Sheep Farmers have said, "These changes reflect the industry's recommendations and we want to thank the government for their commitment to the program's continuous improvement."

The Beef Farmers of Ontario have said, "We would like to thank Minister Hardeman for taking swift action to find solutions to the many concerns raised by BFO."

Our government is proud to have taken immediate action to address farmers' concerns so the program works as intended to support those who lose livestock to predation.

Thank you very much for the question, and thank you very much for allowing me to answer, Mr. Speaker.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Deputy Premier. We've just been in receipt of a media report that the deputy OPP commissioner, Brad Blair, has been fired by this government. The deputy commissioner has been

raising serious questions about the appointment of Premier Ford's close family friend Ron Taverner to the OPP commissioner position and the Premier's attempt at manipulation of the OPP.

Can the Acting Premier confirm that Deputy Commissioner Blair has, in fact, been fired and explain why?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Once again, the NDP have it wrong. The Public Service Commission, in consultation with the OPP, terminated the employment of Brad Blair.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The deputy commissioner has brought key details of the deeply flawed appointment process to light, a process that was in the best interests of Premier Ford and perhaps the interests of the Ford government, but certainly was not in the public interest. It was a brave thing for this person to do, to come forward, and it looks like that bravery has lost him his job.

How can the Acting Premier justify this decision to fire someone who appears to be one of the only people who have been acting with some integrity in this entire fiasco?

Interjections.

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

Minister.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Again, I will remind the members that the Public Service Commission, in consultation with the OPP, made a decision independent of the political process to terminate the employment of Mr. Blair. I will not be commenting, nor should anyone else, on private HR issues.

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TRAPPING INDUSTRY

Ms. Jill Dunlop: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. On Friday, the minister was in North Bay to announce that our government is investing \$1.1 million in the Ontario Fur Managers Federation to help support the thousands of jobs and families that rely on the trapping industry. I think some of my colleagues may be surprised to learn that there are approximately 8,700 commercial trapping licences sold in Ontario each year.

I welcome this announcement because our government recognizes the important contribution that the trapping industry makes to the province's economy and to the sustainable management of Ontario's wildlife. Can the minister please update this House on how this significant investment will make life easier for the people in my riding and across the province?

Hon. John Yakabuski: I'd like to thank the member for Simcoe North for that very important question. I'd also like to thank the Minister of Finance for his warm North Bay hospitality last week.

The minister and I are both committed to making sure that Ontario is open for business and open for jobs. Our government's investment of \$1.1 million will support the Ontario Fur Managers Federation's administration of my

ministry's trapping education program and licence services for Ontario trappers and Ontario trapping instructors. The OFMF is a well-established service provider with in-depth knowledge of the industry and a proven track record to carry out these important responsibilities.

Trapping remains culturally significant for many people across the province, and our trapping regulations are considered among the strictest and most humane anywhere in the world. The province's trapper licence and education requirements help to ensure Ontario's compliance with international humane trapping standards. I look forward to speaking more about the important role that trappers play in wildlife management in the supplemental.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the minister for that response, Mr. Speaker. I know that my constituents of Simcoe North are reassured to know that this minister and our government are standing up for folks like themselves, and we will always work for the people of Ontario who enjoy trapping, hunting or fishing.

I think it is very important to emphasize just how well trained trappers are in our province. The education and licensing programs run by the Ontario Fur Managers Federation play an important role in making sure that Ontario remains one of the most humane jurisdictions in the world.

The minister referenced in his answer the important cultural aspects of trapping in Ontario. Could the minister please expand on this?

Hon. John Yakabuski: I thank the member for that supplementary question as well. For over 400 years, trapping has been a significant part of our culture here in Ontario and has offered employment for many people and their families. I'm incredibly proud to be part of our government for the people that is committed to making Ontario open for business and open for jobs. Trappers continue to play a vital role in wildlife control, and trapping remains an effective wildlife management tool for regulating population numbers of furbearer species such as coyotes, beavers and raccoons.

Trappers also play an important role in reducing human-wildlife conflicts such as damage to property as a result of flooding caused by beavers, and loss of livestock from predation by wolves and coyotes.

Finally, trapping helps support our government's commitment to the responsible management of our natural resources, as royalties from pelts help to fund important fish and wildlife management programs operated by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

SUBVENTIONS DESTINÉES À L'ÉDUCATION EDUCATION FUNDING

M. Guy Bourgouin: Ma question est pour la ministre de l'Éducation. Madame la Ministre, la semaine passée, votre ministère a fait parvenir un mémo aux conseils scolaires en leur recommandant d'être « prudents » en ce qui concerne les « décisions d'embauche ». Dans la note

envoyée par la sous-ministre, on dit que vous voulez changer les ratios élèves/enseignants dans la salle de classe. Autrement dit, vous dites aux enseignants qu'il faut faire plus avec moins.

Madame la Ministre, avez-vous l'intention de réduire notre système d'éducation de classe mondiale et de mettre en péril l'éducation et l'avenir de nos enfants?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Merci beaucoup. When it comes to making sure that we get things right for our students in Ontario, we have to make sure that we leave no stone unturned when it comes to cleaning up the mess that we inherited from the previous Liberal administration. That said, we are working very closely with our education partners to make sure that we identify priorities and that we have two-way communication when it comes to situations that affect the quality of the learning environment in every classroom—rural, urban and northern all together. That said, Speaker, I am pleased to say that we are working very closely to make sure that we get the right mix in the classroom and make sure that our priorities are focused on making sure we have the right teachers in the right classroom so that our students are absolutely prepared for the careers of the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Les conseils francophones seront certainement les plus touchés par cette annonce. Ils sont déjà pas mal débordés. Les conseils scolaires francophones font face à une croissance constante depuis 20 ans. Il y a de plus en plus d'élèves et une pénurie d'enseignants qualifiés et de suppléants.

On a déjà entendu dire qu'un gel aux embauches serait catastrophique pour les conseils scolaires francophones de la province. Mais ce n'est pas étonnant puisque ce gouvernement a constamment démontré son manque d'intérêt auprès des francophones. On n'a plus de commissaire indépendant; on n'a plus d'université franco-ontarienne.

Madame la Ministre, voulez-vous rétrograder les Franco-Ontariens à une deuxième classe de citoyens dans la province?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that we have such a diverse caucus in this PC government, and together we stand united in making sure that francophone education is a number one priority. I know the education partners that are here today with us on their advocacy day know where we stand when it comes to French-language education. We have had wonderful discussions at face-to-face meetings. They know the experience that I bring to the table when it comes to making sure that we support our French-language education.

Again, I'd like to remind everybody in this House what our francophone minister shared earlier. Through our Grants for Student Needs, the total funding for French-language education is \$1.77 billion. We recognize that the demand for French-language teachers is exceeding current supply, and we've had those discussions. I can tell you with absolute certainty that we stand with our francophone teachers and our education partners.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Mr. Speaker, on February 22, I was pleased to attend an event where our government announced a \$500,000 planning grant to the redevelopment of the Wallaceburg campus of the Chatham-Kent Health Alliance. The redevelopment will include expanded ambulatory, emergency and outpatient services. You know, Speaker, it was a great event, supported and attended by many dignitaries, as well as Wallaceburg residents. They were ecstatic over this announcement. That hospital is not going away.

To the minister: Minister, could you please tell us why investments like these are important for our health care system?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much to the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington for his question. We are committed to creating a health care system that is truly centred around the needs of patients. Investments like these ensure that health care providers like the Chatham-Kent Health Alliance continue to do an incredible job of providing care to meet the growing needs of the good people of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

Our government for the people is taking the necessary steps to strengthen and fix our public health care system. If passed, our plan will improve patient experience and strengthen local services to ensure that our public health care system is centred around patients and not around bureaucracy.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you to the minister for that answer. You know, these investments are vital for many communities, especially in rural Ontario. I'm pleased to hear that the minister is improving our public health care system. I'm confident that these funds will ensure that we have top-quality facilities to serve our community for years to come.

At this announcement with the Minister of Infrastructure, I was told by many patients, staff and community members how grateful they are that our government is making the right investments to ensure that our community gets the services that we need.

Mr. Speaker, could the minister please tell us how this investment will help our local community?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I would like to thank the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington for that excellent question, and also for joining us in Wallaceburg for that important announcement.

Mr. Speaker, 14 years ago, long before I was elected as MPP, I was joined by members of the community for what was called SOS: Save Our Sydenham. Sydenham hospital, which is now the Wallaceburg site of the Chatham-Kent Health Alliance, was in danger of being closed by the former Liberal government. It was a great privilege to be able to stand there, 14 years later, to announce \$500,000 in funding for redevelopment and revitalization planning for this hospital.

Mr. Speaker, our government knows that health infrastructure is truly for the people. It is the hospitals that care for our parents and where our children are born. Our commitment will ensure this hospital will serve patients in Wallaceburg, across Chatham-Kent and Lambton county for generations to come.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my question is to the Deputy Premier. It's a chilling day in Ontario when a well-respected OPP deputy commissioner, who dedicated his life to this province, is fired for standing up for the integrity and independence of our provincial police. The Minister of Community Safety says that the Ford government had no role in the decision to fire Brad Blair. Yet, the OPP says that the deputy minister made the decision, and it was an order in council.

Now, Premier Ford has said many times that Mr. Blair would be punished for speaking out. Did the Ford cabinet make this decision to fire Brad Blair or did they not?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members, please take their seats. The question is to the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The leader of the NDP can participate in a game of rhetoric. I'm not going to.

As I stated, the Public Service Commission, in consultation with the OPP, terminated Mr. Blair's employment. As a result of the termination, you cannot serve as a deputy commissioner; therefore, the OIC was revoked.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I have to say this: It is absolutely chilling that this minister is not prepared to acknowledge what appears to be already in the public domain in terms of how this decision to fire Brad Blair has come about. I would ask her to think carefully about how she responds to the honourable members in this House.

The Premier said that this person was going to suffer for speaking out, for standing up for our independent OPP, and now all of a sudden he's fired.

The question remains to this minister: Who pulled the plug on Brad Blair? Was it, in fact, this cabinet, this Premier who lived up to his threats and actually decided to cut it off for Mr. Blair, who was only standing up for the people of this province?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, I have no intention of participating in a smear campaign or commenting on personnel matters led by the OPP and the Public Service Commission. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes question period for this morning. There are no deferred votes. This House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1144 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I would like to introduce a special guest who's here at the Legislature today: Sergio Mourato de Jesus. He's here visiting us, and he's a reporter with the Omni News station. Welcome to the Legislature.

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

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I would like to ask my colleagues here in the House today if I could have unanimous consent to give a member's statement on behalf of the great member from Don Valley West, who's not here. I would like to take her place, please.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Orléans is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to make a member's statement on behalf of the member for Don Valley West. Agreed? I heard a no.

Introduction of visitors?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Speaker, I would like to introduce Patricia Lee. She's the grandmother of page Alyssa Eaton, who's sitting right in front of you there. Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AUTISM TREATMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: Since the government announced the changes to autism treatment and services, the minister has asked us, "What would you have me do to fix it?" Well, many parents in Nickel Belt wanted me to share their ideas—parents like Devon Crossgrove for their daughter Audrey, and Mrs. Chantal Chartrand for her daughter Valerie. These parents are invested in finding solutions because what the government has put forward is not the solution. It will hurt their children. It will hurt their family. They want funding based on the child's needs.

Laurie and Travis Zalinder want the minister to know the improvements that their son is making. Their son Gavin is turning six years old. He has severe autism and is mostly non-verbal. He has been receiving 27 hours a week of IBI therapy at school since January 2018. He is now in the classroom for 50% of the day.

His teacher writes about the progress he has made in their classroom and how the changes announced by the government will make it impossible for Gavin to access the support that he needs, and the deterioration in skills that will result. They tell me that they feel like the government is giving up on Gavin.

Shannon Lavoie's four-year-old son Teo has autism. She says that money should be allocated for therapy depending on severity of diagnosis and amount of intervention that the child needs. We agree.

I hope the minister has the courage to accept the help and advice of these parents, because children's lives and children's futures are in the balance.

RANDY PAPPLE

Mr. Will Bouma: I rise in the House today to pay tribute to the extraordinary dedication of Brant county deputy chief of paramedics Randy Papple and his 40-plus years of service to our community.

Randy can still remember his first call. He graduated from Conestoga College one day and the following day he was eagerly working. As a paramedic, Randy was involved in responding to many local calls for assistance as well as some large-scale emergencies, such as the Hagersville tire fire and the Mississauga train derailment evacuation.

Of exceptional note, however, is the considerable and consistent volunteer effort Randy has demonstrated both in promoting the paramedic services as well as in supporting his local community. Randy volunteered as a firefighter for 20 years and raised funds across the province for numerous charities through running, biking and jogging—running a marathon while juggling. Rising up the ranks over the years, Randy now feels that the Brant county paramedic service is in such a great spot that it was time for others to take the service forward.

On behalf of the people of Brantford–Brant and all of our first responders, who hold a special place in all of our hearts, thank you for 40 years of faithful service, Randy.

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

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's with great sadness that I am rising to bring attention to a very serious issue in Hamilton. This week, my colleagues from Hamilton—MPP Monique Taylor, MPP Paul Miller and our leader, Andrea Horwath—met with the families of Jordyn Hastings and Olivia Smosarski.

Olivia and Jordyn were 19-year-old best friends who died together when the vehicle that they were driving crossed the grassy median of the Red Hill Valley Parkway and collided with a minivan. Mechanical issues, inattentive driving, intoxication and distraction were all ruled out as a cause.

Theirs is not the only tragedy. In fact, there have been seven deaths and 668 crashes since 2012.

We are calling for a judicial review of how safety concerns about the roadway were handled, including the initial lack of disclosure about the 2013 friction test. The "angel" parents we met with said, "We know that nothing will bring back our precious children. We just want to ensure that no family has to suffer what we have."

A judicial review will ensure an independent and transparent process and get devastated families the answers that they deserve. To echo Andrea Horwath, "It's time to do what should have been done at the first sign of substandard safety: get to work making the Red Hill Valley Parkway safe for everyone."

Mr. Speaker, we cannot allow any more lives to be put at risk.

TAYLOR WEBER

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Today I rise to recognize Taylor Weber of Mount Forest. She recently completed her fifth and final season with the Laurentian Voyageurs women's hockey team at Laurentian University. As team captain she demonstrated commitment and dedication, both in the classroom and on the ice.

Her hockey season is not over quite yet. This past weekend, Taylor put on the Maple Leaf as a member of the Canada's women's hockey team in the Winter Universiade. The Universiade is the world's largest university winter multi-sports competition.

This March, Taylor and her teammates will hit the ice in Russia as they face off against student athletes on the international stage.

Taylor earned her spot on the team through hard work and persistence. A dependable two-way forward, Taylor impressed the Team Canada selection committee with her defensive skills and tenacity. Leading by example, she is known for her ability to block shots, win puck battles, and shut down opposing forwards. Given her selfless style of the play, it is fitting that Taylor humbly credits the support of her parents, Scott and Lisa Weber, her coaches and her teammates for her selection to Team Canada.

I want to wish Taylor and her teammates all the best as they go for gold in Russia. Go, Canada, go!

CELEBRITY CHEF—MEN WHO COOK

Ms. Sara Singh: What an honour to rise here today to speak about an exciting initiative in Brampton. This week I had the absolute pleasure of attending the 22nd annual Celebrity Chef—Men Who Cook event, hosted by the United Achievers' Club at Century Gardens Recreation Centre in my riding of Brampton Centre.

The United Achievers' Club is a non-profit organization established in 1980 that seeks to raise the profile and consciousness of our Black and Caribbean communities, provide effective and meaningful mentorship opportunities for youth, and encourage greater participation in community and political affairs.

I've had the opportunity to attend many of their wonderful events across Brampton, but by far my favourite is the annual Men Who Cook competition.

Speaker, let me just say: These Brampton men threw down in the kitchen, and the food was amazing. There were over 25 men who all cooked up a storm to raise funds for the William Osler paediatric sickle cell clinic at Brampton Civic Hospital.

I'd like to acknowledge a few of these chefs, such as: Greg Amoroso from the Peel Regional Police; Alex Battick, a local lawyer and mentor; Everton Dwight Campbell, a community leader and entrepreneur; Lester McDonald, who always brings the heat; Nicholas Stennett, owner and chef at Tricnic Catering; and Dale Williams,

award-winning chef, cookbook author and creator of What the Rass hot sauce.

I could go on, but I'd like to thank all the men who participated in this fantastic event. These men cooked up everything from Rasta pasta, jerk chicken and crab cakes to chicken and waffles and a rock 'n' roll banana split. I just have to say, the food and the men were absolutely delicious.

Lastly, a special thank you to the organizers for hosting a wonderful event to bring our community together. There's nothing like food to bring us together to celebrate.

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HOSPICE PALLIATIVE CARE

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Last month, I had the opportunity of visiting Matthews House Hospice in Alliston, which offers caring and compassionate services for individuals, their loved ones and caregivers who are taking a journey of a life-limiting illness or grieving a loss. I was amazed by the warm atmosphere, the welcoming staff and the overall quality of care they provide. It's remarkable how the surrounding community came together, donating time and resources to establish this wonderful home. I was also happy to see that our government assisted the community effort by committing \$1.2 million to support the construction costs for six residential hospice beds in their new facility.

Everyone should have access to dignified end-of-life care that respects the wishes of the patient and their loved ones, which is what I seek to accomplish with my private member's bill, Bill 3, the Compassionate Care Act. I was also happy to see our government invest nearly \$33 million to build 193 new hospice beds across the province. With investments like this, we are ensuring that these patients are provided with the proper dignity, comfort and respect they deserve.

I want to thank the staff at Matthews House for their incredible service, and I look forward to Ontario's government for the people continuing to provide more people across the province with the compassionate hospice palliative care they deserve when nearing the end of their lives.

MERRITTON LEGION

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Today I rise to recognize the 90th anniversary of Merritton Legion Branch 138, located in the riding of St. Catharines. The Legion originated due to the hard work of a group of Merritton veterans who wanted to create a branch in their own hometown.

On January 10, 1929, Branch 138 received a charter from the Royal Canadian Legion Dominion Command to establish the Legion in Merritton, with its first-ever president, Mr. David Cameron. Merritton amalgamated with the city of St. Catharines in 1960; however, it maintains a distinct community identity and spirit today. In fact, HMCS Merrittonia, a naval corvette ship that served during World War II, was named after Merritton, Ontario, in 1944.

Branch 138 has served our local war heroes and area residents, hosting weekly fish fries, darts every Sunday, and toonie and steak draws on Fridays.

I want to acknowledge long-time members of Branch 138 in Merritton, veterans Ernie Adams and Ed Boutineau, who can be seen in the Legion on a daily basis and participating in all Remembrance Day activities. Current branch president Trish Gander works together with Branch 138 and members ensuring that all veterans and their families in Merritton are supported and taken care of.

I am proud to be a long-time Merrittonian, and I'm proud to be a Legion member in Merritton. I would like to extend a happy 90th anniversary and invite all to Merritton Legion Branch 138 on March 30.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mr. Stephen Crawford: This afternoon, I have the pleasure of speaking about a noteworthy event taking place in my riding of Oakville tomorrow in celebration of International Women's Day.

On International Women's Day, a date celebrated around the world, we pause in our daily lives to take the time to recognize and celebrate the advances of women in our society and acknowledge their achievements. I am reminded of our own country's history and the transformational change that has been brought about as a result of landmark judicial rulings such as the Persons Case. Women have worked hard to earn their place in positions of influence in corporate Canada, cultural and educational institutions, and election to councils, Legislatures and Parliaments across Canada.

As the parent of four daughters, I know that I want them to have the same opportunities in life as the boys in their classes do. I am thankful that, in Canada, my girls can aspire to and achieve anything they set their mind to. It is for this reason that my wife, Najia, and I are proud supporters of Plan International's Because I am a Girl campaign to empower women and girls around the world.

Tomorrow, on International Women's Day, I am honoured to attend an event in my riding with the minister responsible for women's issues, Lisa MacLeod. The Zonta Club of Oakville will be hosting their annual dinner event tomorrow, March 5. The date also marks Zonta International's 100th anniversary. The event will raise money for the Oakville Hospital Foundation, the Zonta Club of Oakville and Zonta International, with funds used to help these organizations with operational costs as they help to make a difference in our communities.

I am very excited to attend—and would encourage all of my legislative colleagues how they might share in the recognition of women in our society on this International Women's Day.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS WORLD GAMES

Mr. Dave Smith: I'd like to take this opportunity to speak about a trio of exceptional athletes from my riding of Peterborough-Kawartha. They'll be flying out later this

week to represent Canada at the Special Olympics World Games being held in Abu Dhabi from March 14 to 21.

Brandon Vansickle lives in Ennismore and will be representing Canada in soccer. In addition to this, both of Brandon's parents are coaches with Special Olympics.

Dylan Armstrong lives in the city of Peterborough and will be playing alongside Brandon on Canada's soccer team.

Crystal Cochrane will be representing Canada in 10-pin bowling. Crystal also hails from the city of Peterborough and competes nationally in both 10-pin and five-pin bowling. Five-pin bowling is a Canadian game and is not being represented this year at the world games.

I had the pleasure of celebrating, on February 24—my birthday—with these three athletes and their families. They joined me at the Mount Community Centre, and we had an excellent dinner put on by the Mount itself. I learned a great deal about these three athletes.

Actually, I have known Brandon for a number of years. He has been involved in special hockey for quite some time.

For all three of these athletes, it is their first time representing Canada on the international stage. On behalf of the Ontario Legislature, I'd like to offer them our heartfelt thanks for their dedication to their respective sports.

Crystal, Dylan, Brandon, you're an inspiration to everyone in Ontario.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I beg leave to present a report on the pre-budget consultation 2019 from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Crawford has presented the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member for Oakville wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs conducted its pre-budget consultation from January 15 to January 29. Public hearings were held in Dryden, Timmins, Ottawa, Sarnia, Kitchener-Waterloo, Peterborough and Toronto. The committee heard from a total of 214 witnesses and received 114 written submissions from agencies, associations, community groups, local administrative bodies, municipalities, organizations, transfer payment partners, unions and individuals. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank each and every one of them for taking the time to share their views at the committee.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the committee, the Clerk of the Committee

and the committee staff for their commitment, hard work and co-operation.

With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Crawford has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried on division.

Debate adjourned.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Good afternoon. Today former OPP Deputy Commissioner Brad Blair was relieved of his duties—this decision made by the Public Service Commission, in consultation with the OPP Commissioner, Gary Couture. I'm sure this decision was not made lightly.

All public servants take an oath of office. It appears this oath was breached.

In addition, section 2(1)(e) of the code of the conduct under the Police Services Act expressly prohibits a police officer from communication to the media without proper authority.

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Further, Mr. Blair's letter to the Ombudsman clearly contained information connected with the OPP regarding confidential information. Mr. Blair was informed of this decision on December 28 by his ethics executive.

By releasing more private information during his subsequent legal filings, Mr. Blair breached his oath and appears to have breached the act. He has violated his duties and the obligations he is supposed to uphold as a public servant. He released confidential, private information for his own personal gain. He used his role and uniform for his own desire to be the commissioner of the OPP. It is for these reasons that I was notified of his dismissal earlier today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have to say: somewhat shocking, but not surprising. The reality is, nobody's buying what you have to say on this whole issue. There's an old saying in politics that says, "Where there's smoke, there's fire."

This all dates back to the time of Mr. Taverner. Our Premier—I should say "your" Premier—decided that he was going to appoint his friend to become the new commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police, and what's going on today is directly related to what's going on over there. Nobody buys that Mr. Blair was fired as a result of something outside of anything but, quite frankly, the cabinet having signed an OIC. We know, from what we've been able to learn, that the firing actually happened by order in council, and with an order in council, that means to say that you as the cabinet minister and the cabinet were well aware and a decision was made.

I just say to my friends across the way that part of the problem is that we need to have transparency and there has

to be a light shone on this entire issue. You cannot, all of a sudden, operate behind closed doors and repeat exactly what the Liberals did when they were in government by trying to foist your way through on bad decisions by trying to keep the information away from the public. There needs to be a public trial of some type or some sort of an inquiry to make sure that it's public, that it's transparent and that we shed light on actually what's going on here.

These are serious matters. We have a Premier who's intent on hiring his friend to become the head of the OPP. The Ontario Provincial Police, as we know, is to be arm's length from what we do here at Queen's Park, and you can't have any kind of way that there's interference from the political side when it comes to the OPP.

As they say in politics, this thing stinks to high heaven. This has the hand of government all over it; it has the hand of the Premier. Nobody's buying what you guys have to say right now. The best thing—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to remind all members to make your comments through the Chair.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To you, Mr. Speaker: It stinks to high heaven. I do agree.

But I just have to say to my friends across the way that you need to make this public. There has to be a light that's shone on this issue. There needs to be a public inquiry or some sort of a review that is transparent, some sort of trial that allows us to get at what is actually going on: Who knew what, and what did they do? The Premier, quite frankly, and the cabinet—I don't think most people are buying what you have to say.

I say to the government across the way, if you think you can come into the House and try to sort of blow this whole thing away, you have another thing coming. People don't have any confidence in what you're doing on this file. It's clear that there's interference on the part of the government when it comes to what's going on with both Mr. Blair and what happened with Mr. Taverner before. I just say that there needs to be a clear and transparent process that allows light to be shone on what's going on. The public has the right to know and find out exactly what's happening because this is the public's business. For the government to do what you're doing, quite frankly, I think is a grave disservice to Ontario and shows that you're no different than the previous administration when it comes to doing what you're doing behind closed doors.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, I'll remind all members of the importance of making their comments through the Chair—not addressing the other side with "you, you, you," but making your comments through the Chair, through the Speaker. That's the way we do it here.

Responses?

Mr. Chris Glover: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): A point of order, the member for Spadina–Fort York.

Mr. Chris Glover: It's my pleasure to welcome to the House and introduce Sergio Mourato. He's a host and reporter with Omni TV.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I apologize. The member for Guelph has the opportunity to respond as well. I recognize the member for Guelph.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, I want to reach out to the members opposite and say, "Clear the air on this file." It's inappropriate for the Premier to appoint his friend to be the commissioner of the OPP. There's legislation before this House right now where the government talks about restoring confidence and trust in policing. But confidence and trust in policing means that we have an independent police force in Ontario, we have a police force that's not subject to interference from the government in its hiring practices or any other practices. There are serious questions that the people of Ontario are asking about this entire appointment process, and now the firing of Mr. Blair.

I think we owe it to the people of Ontario to have an independent inquiry, a public investigation that is independent of government, to clear the air. We need to know who knew when firings and hirings happened and who was in charge of making those decisions. That is the only way we're going to clear the air on this.

Right now, in the federal Parliament, we have a former minister, Jody Wilson-Raybould, who has had the courage to stand up and speak out and talk about political interference in our legal system, in our judicial system. I'm hoping that at the provincial level we have someone on the government benches who is going to show the same courage, to stand up and speak out on what is right, to say that it's wrong to interfere in police business.

I ask the members opposite, and I ask the minister, to be straight with the people of Ontario and agree to a public inquiry or an independent investigation so we can get to the bottom of this issue, because that's how we maintain trust in our police force, our legal system, in our government. I think we owe that to the people of Ontario.

PETITIONS

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I have a petition entitled "Stop Auto Insurance Gouging."

"Whereas some neighbourhoods across the GTA have been unfairly targeted by discriminatory practices in the insurance industry;

"Whereas people in these neighbourhoods are penalized with crushing auto insurance rates because of their postal code;

"Whereas the failure to improve government oversight of the auto insurance industry has left everyday families feeling the squeeze and yearning for relief;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ban the practice of postal code discrimination in the GTA when it comes to auto insurance premiums."

I support this petition. I'm adding my signature to it and providing it to page Josie to deliver to the table.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Toby Barrett: A petition addressed 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;

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"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 agree with the sentiment and affix my signature.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled "Stop Bill 66: Protect Our Drinking Water and Our Environment." I would like to thank my constituents from 200 Dufferin for signing this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas" Premier "Ford has introduced Bill 66 ("Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness" Act), which rolls back hard-won protections for children, consumers, workers and the environment;

"Whereas Bill 66 creates a municipal planning loophole that allows developers to override legislation designed to protect our environment, farmlands and drinking water;

"Whereas" Premier "Ford is dragging Ontario backward by weakening water regulations that were put in place after the E. coli outbreak in Walkerton;

"Whereas Bill 66 allows the greenbelt to be bulldozed, undermining efforts to make communities in Ontario more sustainable, livable and resilient;

"Whereas Bill 66 threatens the continued viability of agricultural communities within the greenbelt;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the ... Ford government to protect the safety of drinking water for all Ontarians, to protect the greenbelt, and to prioritize the sustainability and conservation of Ontario's waters by revoking Bill 66."

I fully agree with this petition and will be signing my name as well.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Paris Galt moraine performs critical ecological and hydrological functions that are vital for the well-being of our environment and communities;

“Whereas the moraine provides habitat for wildlife, maintains wetlands, streams and rivers, and filters and stores drinking water;

“Whereas the city of Guelph is the largest city in Canada to rely almost exclusively on groundwater for their drinking water and the moraine is an essential water recharge area in the Grand River watershed;

“Whereas the moraines in the area provide drinking water for close to 200,000 people and the surrounding population is expected to grow by one million people by 2041;

“Whereas protecting the moraine is the fiscally responsible option to ensure the availability of clean drinking water and finding other means of providing water would be extremely expensive;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to protect the ecological and hydrological integrity of the Paris Galt moraine.”

I fully support this petition. I will be signing it and asking Shumyle to take it to the table.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I have a petition pertaining to animal protection in Ontario. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas all animals in Ontario deserve our protection but are largely going unprotected at this time;

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) is the only agency in Ontario authorized to enforce animal protection laws;

“Whereas the OSPCA has continually cut back services, including the recent decision to stop investigating incidents involving farm animals, including horses, as well as failing to fully investigate poorly run zoos, dogfighting operations, puppy and kitten mills and even documented cases of dogs being tortured in the city of Toronto;

“Whereas the OSPCA has made itself completely unaccountable to the public by eliminating annual general members meetings and board elections as well as eliminating a government representative from their board meetings;

“Whereas the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services provides an annual grant to the OSPCA of \$5.75 million of the public's dollars, for which the OSPCA is to provide province-wide coverage and other services which the OSPCA has failed to deliver;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to exercise its authority, through the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services under the current funding transfer payment agreement and the OSPCA Act, requiring that:

“—through the OSPCA Act the government annul the bylaws of the OSPCA;

“—a new bylaw be required that re-establishes annual general members meetings, open board elections and a government representative attending board meetings;

“—the government immediately suspend funding to the OSPCA and conduct a forensic audit of the organization's use of public funds;

“—the government conduct a service delivery audit of the OSPCA relating to the enforcement of the OSPCA Act;

“—recognize the important job of animal protection by creating a more accountable system that ensures the immediate and long-term protection of the millions of animals who live among us.”

I support this petition and will give it to page Collin.

SERVICES D'URGENCE

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais présenter une pétition de la part de Clément Lacelle de Chelmsford dans mon comté. Ça s'appelle « Intervention d'urgence 911 ».

« Alors que lorsque nous sommes confrontés à une urgence nous savons tous que nous appelons le 911 pour de l'aide; et

« Alors que l'accès aux services d'urgence par le biais du 911 n'est pas disponible dans toutes les régions de l'Ontario, mais la plupart des gens croient qu'ils le sont; et

« Alors que plusieurs personnes ont découvert que le 911 n'était pas disponible alors qu'elles faisaient face à une urgence; et

« Alors que tous les Ontariens » et Ontariennes « s'attendent et méritent d'avoir accès au service 911 partout dans la province; »

Ils demandent à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario « de fournir une intervention d'urgence 911 partout en Ontario par des lignes téléphoniques ou cellulaires. »

J'appuie cette pétition. Je vais y ajouter mon nom, et je demande à la page Alyssa de l'amener à la table des greffiers.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas all animals in Ontario deserve our protection but are largely going unprotected at this time;

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) is the only agency in Ontario authorized to enforce animal protection laws;

“Whereas the OSPCA has continually cut back services, including the recent decision to stop investigating incidents involving farm animals, including horses, as well as failing to fully investigate poorly run zoos, dogfighting operations, puppy and kitten mills and even documented cases of dogs being tortured in the city of Toronto;

“Whereas the OSPCA has made itself completely unaccountable to the public by eliminating annual general members meetings and board elections as well as eliminating a government representative from their board meetings;

“Whereas the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services provides an annual grant to the OSPCA of \$5.75 million of the public's dollars, for which

the OSPCA is to provide province-wide coverage and other services which the OSPCA has failed to deliver;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to exercise its authority, through the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services under the current funding transfer payment agreement and the OSPCA Act, requiring that:

“—through the OSPCA Act the government annul the bylaws of the OSPCA;

“—a new bylaw be required that re-establishes annual general members meetings, open board elections and a government representative attending board meetings;

“—the government immediately suspend funding to the OSPCA and conduct a forensic audit of the organization’s use of public funds;

“—the government conduct a service delivery audit of the OSPCA relating to the enforcement of the OSPCA Act;

“—recognize the important job of animal protection by creating a more accountable system that ensures the immediate and long-term protection of the millions of animals who live among us.”

I agree with this petition and send it down with page Josie.

CHILD CARE WORKERS

Mr. Jamie West: I want to thank Cathy-Jo Case for helping to collect 450 signatures for this petition.

“Petition to Maintain the Provincial Wage Enhancement Grant for Registered Early Childhood Educators and Child Care Workers in Licensed Child Care.

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“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 support this petition and will affix my signature.

CHILD CARE WORKERS

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to thank Paula Greenberg from my riding for getting the signatures on this petition. The petition reads:

“Petition to Maintain the Provincial Wage Enhancement Grant for Registered Early Childhood Educators and Child Care Workers in Licensed Child Care.

“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 agree with this wholeheartedly, will affix my signature and give it to Julian to bring to the Clerk.

CHILD CARE WORKERS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: “Petition to Maintain the Provincial Wage Enhancement Grant for Registered Early Childhood Educators and Child Care Workers in Licensed Child Care.

“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, sign it and give it to page Alyssa to deliver to the table.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): 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. Rakocevic assumes ballot item number 62 and Ms. Shaw assumes ballot item number 75.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 68, An Act with respect to community safety and policing, that the Standing Committee on Justice Policy be authorized to meet on Thursday, March 7, 2019, from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. for public hearings on the bill; and

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 68:

—That the deadline for requests to appear be 5 p.m. on Tuesday, March 5, 2019; and

—that the Clerk of the Committee provide a list of all interested presenters to each member of the subcommittee and their designate following the deadline for requests to appear by 6 p.m. on Tuesday, March 5, 2019; and

—that each member of the subcommittee or their designate provide the Clerk of the Committee with a prioritized list of presenters to be scheduled, chosen from the list of all interested presenters received by the Clerk, by 10 a.m. on Wednesday, March 6, 2019; and

—that each witness will receive up to eight minutes for their presentation, followed by 12 minutes divided equally amongst the recognized parties for questioning; and

—that the deadline for filing written submissions be 6 p.m. on Thursday, March 7, 2019; and

—that the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 12 noon on Tuesday, March 12, 2019; and

That the Standing Committee on Justice Policy shall be authorized to meet on Tuesday, March 19, 2019, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. and Thursday, March 21, 2019, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m. for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That on Thursday, March 21, 2019, at 5:30 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. At this time, the Chair shall allow one 20-minute waiting period, pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Monday, March 25, 2019. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, the Speaker shall put the question

for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called that same day; and

That, when the order for third reading of the bill is called, two hours of debate shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, with 50 minutes allotted to Her Majesty's government, 50 minutes allotted to Her Majesty's loyal opposition, 10 minutes to the independent Liberal members, and 10 minutes to the independent Green member; and

That, notwithstanding standing order 81(c), the bill may be called for third reading more than once in the same sessional day; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to 20 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Ms. Thompson has moved government notice of motion number 31. Further debate?

Mr. Stephen Crawford: It's an honour to be able to speak today.

Before I speak about this bill, I would like to take the time to thank both Minister Sylvia Jones, Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, and Minister Caroline Mulroney, the Attorney General of Ontario, for the work that they put into this reform act before the Legislature.

I also wish to recognize the efforts of police officers in our communities across this province, who keep us safe, uphold the law and act as role models for our young people.

I would also like to say a special thank you to Chief Stephen Tanner of the Halton police service for the great work that he does, as well as the Halton regional police force for the community of Oakville and the community of Halton. Thank you for your service.

Given the commitment and dedication of front-line police officers in our communities, it was disappointing to see the previous government's introduction of Bill 175, a decidedly anti-police piece of legislation. Under Bill 175, police officers were looked upon and treated with suspicion, making it increasingly difficult for them to do their job, while expanding the oversight bureaucracy of the province's three oversight agencies.

The bill went too far beyond the original intent of reforming oversight. Before being introduced, the government was criticized by police organizations across the province for the negative potential impacts, had it been implemented. They took some of the recommendations, but many of the issues that police officers warned of still persisted, and we are seeing those effects today.

1350

Officers already have a very difficult job. They have to, at great risk to themselves, hold criminals accountable for their actions and stand up for victims to keep our communities safe. They often experience trauma from their time in the course of their service. But, Madam Speaker, officers proudly wear their uniforms, and take on these occupational risks with a great sense of purpose and commitment to serve constituents, which must be commended. Their jobs

are stressful and dangerous, but they make a difference in our neighbourhoods, and we need to help reduce workplace stress, not add to it. But that is not what the previous government's bill did.

Instead, when our officers responded to dangerous situations, it resulted in months upon months upon months of investigations. The new, punitive bureaucracy became a constant in the minds of these officers, who were only doing the job they were trained for.

A good example of this would be the following two cases: First, in the case of the Danforth shooting, a police officer was able to end the rampage by neutralizing the perpetrator, the same perpetrator who took the life of two people, including that of a young girl. When the police officers responded accordingly, just like their training had prepared them to, they were subject to a six-month investigation. While I recognize the need for oversight over the conduct of police officers, we need to ensure that our response and retroactive legislation is measured and appropriate.

Moreover, police officers who are responding to a call and are present during the suicide of a citizen—they too were to undergo a lengthy investigation that could last for months on end. These are just simply not fair to the officers who are doing their job, and it does not create a positive work environment for police.

I would like to quote Rob Jamieson, president and CEO of the Ontario Provincial Police Association: "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 today intend to empower police across Ontario to ensure community safety. We look forward to reviewing details of the bill and participating in the legislative process."

The Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act will restore fairness and respect for police, enhancing oversight while improving governance, training and transparency. Police know that public trust is essential for them to do their jobs effectively, and oversight is a key to creating trust. Unfortunately, the old oversight system was broken, confusing and slow, which doesn't work for the police, nor the public.

The proposed changes in this bill will respond to Justice Tulloch's recommendations in the Report of the Independent Police Oversight Review. It would transform the office of the Independent Police Review Director into an improved and enhanced body, the Law Enforcement Complaints Agency, or LECA for short. Its responsibilities would include:

- receiving and screening public complaints involving police officers, special constables employed by the Niagara Parks Commission, peace officers employed by the Legislative Protective Service, and forwarding complaints about members of a board—for example, municipal or First Nations—to the inspector general;

- assigning complaints for investigation relating to police officers, Niagara Parks Commission special constables and peace officers employed in the Legislative

Protective Service to a police service or an agency investigator; and

- requiring investigative entities to explain delays in the completion of an investigation after 120 days, and every 30 days thereafter.

By providing one window for public complaints, we can reduce duplication and better focus the mandate of the special investigations unit. The proposed legislation would also strengthen the independence and focus the mandate of the special investigations unit. We will establish the SIU as a provincial agency accountable to the Attorney General in a new, separate statute. This would in turn make "officials," who include police officers, special constables employed by the Niagara Parks Commission and peace officers with legislative security subject to SIU investigation.

The legislation would also assign a "designated authority" for officials for purposes of the act. The designated authority would be a police chief, in relation to police officers, and a designated authority for other officials would be set out by regulation.

Maintaining mandatory notification of the SIU under specified circumstances, for example, where there is a serious injury or death and there was use of force by an official; where the specified circumstances are not met, only requiring notification if the designated authority reasonably believes that the official's actions may have been a contributing factor in the serious injury or death—this would ensure that where there is no significant risk, police action constituted criminal conduct incidents—such as when police officers arrive on scene after a suicide—would not be investigated. This is important because it would speed up the investigations, allowing officers to resume their duties more quickly, while retaining effective oversight.

The proposed legislation would also strengthen the role of the Inspector General of Policing. Firstly, it would establish the role of the IG within the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services to monitor, inspect and ensure compliance with the act and its regulations. It would also ensure the delivery of adequate and effective policing, and empower the inspector general to receive and review policy complaints. To increase efficiency, the inspector general would also be able to impose remedies for board members' misconduct and non-compliance with the Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019, rather than assigning this function to the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

This legislation would also clarify the right of the inspector general and inspectors to access closed police service board meetings. They would be required to forward the investigative report regarding a board member's misconduct to the entity responsible for the appointment of the board member.

In order to keep accountability, the IG would serve a term of five years, with the possibility of a one-term renewal of five years.

The COPS act would also better governance, training and transparency. One of the key ways that this will occur

is mandating human rights, systemic racism, diversity and Indigenous training for new officers, new special constables and police service board members. This is an early response to Justice Tulloch's training recommendations, presented in his report entitled Report of the Independent Street Checks Review, which revolved around the practice of carding. It will also require police service board members to successfully complete basic training on roles and responsibilities before exercising their assigned powers and duties. This means that only completely trained officers will be able to begin street tasks in a public-facing role. I believe that investing in our human resources and investing in the training of our front-line police officers will result in stronger community safety partnerships between police and the people they serve.

This bill also proposes changes to the Coroners Act to enhance public safety and improve service delivery. These include:

- requiring that all items seized as part of a coroner's death investigation be ordered for safekeeping to a member of a police service, to ensure that seized items are kept at the most secure location possible;

- creating a new investigative screening provision to allow coroners to have access to information, including medical records, to ensure that decisions to investigate deaths are based on a complete picture of the deceased's health history; and

- clarifying that the chief coroner has the authority to conduct historical death reviews. Retrospective analysis of deaths over time can identify common factors and trends that could help prevent further deaths and improve the health and safety of Ontarians.

By treating police fairly, the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act will ensure that the police, government and the people of Ontario remain partners in creating a more secure province.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Madam Speaker, I have to say I am not pleased to participate in this, yet another time allocation debate. I want to lay out fairly clearly why that is.

First of all, we are debating a bill that is significant. There are some things in this bill that we can all support. Let's agree to that: There are things in here that are okay. But it is also a very technical and a very large bill, and never mind that the government is going to short-shrift debate here in the House; the bigger problem is that they're going to short-shrift the public when it comes to their ability to be able to have their say at committee. How many police officers, how many police boards, how many citizens, how many lawyers, how many other people would want to be able to come and speak to this bill from the point of what it does, or maybe what it doesn't do or what it does improperly? The government is going to essentially give the public one day once this time allocation motion passes. They're going to give the public one day to come here to Toronto to speak to a bill that we're going to have to deal with for how many years after.

You know, there are police services outside the city of Toronto. I just want to let other people know. There are

police services in places like Attawapiskat, in Timmins, in Kenora, in Fort Frances and all kinds of other communities. We have police services there, either Ontario Provincial Police or, if not that, a municipal police force. The government is saying, by way of this particular time allocation motion, that the only people that matter are the ones who are going to come to Toronto. Well, a police force, a municipal council, the public, whoever might be interested in speaking to this bill, for or against, is not going to have an opportunity to come here as easily as somebody living in downtown Toronto.

1400

Now, should people in downtown Toronto have the ability to come here and present? Absolutely. It is the largest city in Canada. It's our provincial capital. What happens here is a big deal, and we understand that. What this government seems to forget—this particular Premier—is that the mistakes made by the Wynne government before, and the McGuinty government, of not giving the public the ability to have their say is something that is just wrong. It makes, first of all, for bad legislation—because you learn. When you put a bill out in committee, and you send it into a community somewhere in Ontario, wherever it might be, you'll be surprised by what you're going to hear, because people do read this legislation—not every average citizen, but people that are interested.

You have police service boards, you have police officers, you have police unions, you have citizens, you have court workers, you have chiefs. You have all kinds of people who are interested in this issue. Some of them are going to say, "Hey, job well done. Here's something that we like." But if you're going to do it, at least do it right.

What this government is doing is saying, "We're smarter than everybody else in Ontario, and we know how to draft legislation without error on the first try." Well, I've been here for a few years, Madam Speaker, as you have, and you darned well know that ministries and our staff sometimes get it wrong when they're drafting legislation, because as you draft legislation, you're drafting legislation from direction given by who wants the bill. They say, "We want a bill to speak to issues A, B, C and D," and they do the best case they can in order to speak to those issues that they're drafting to, but they have no way of knowing the nuances about how this is all going to play out and if the draft actually will work.

I've been here, as you have, Madam Speaker, and have seen how many times legislation is drafted in this place with good intent—with good intent, it is drafted—and does not have adequate public hearings. The bill gets passed, and after the bill is enacted and we're having to live with it, people go, "Oh, wow. That's not what it was supposed to do. Now we have a problem." Then the government has to come back with another bill to fix what they messed up in the first place with the first bill. So the government is doing nobody any favours here by way of time allocation.

We have said, which I'll explain a little bit later on another bill that's going to get time-allocated, that there

are ways of sitting down with the opposition to be able to get what you want. We understand, from the opposition side of the House, that you are the government. You propose the legislation; you decide when you're going to call it—right?—and at the end of the day, you have to have your way. We understand the British parliamentary system and how it works. But we also have a job in the opposition, in order to raise questions as to what you're doing—is it right? Could it be made better? Are there errors and or are there ways of improving?—and, where it doesn't make sense, to speak against that.

A government loses nothing by sending a bill out to committee. The government gets everything, because they may get the legislation right. A good example of that, Madam Speaker, is that the government has now proposed a bill that is going to revamp our health care system. I'm speaking to this from a time allocation perspective, because for every bill up to now, the government has time-allocated when it comes to committee hearings. Not once, since the government has been here, has it decided to talk to the opposition and say, "Okay, tell you what. We'll give you time in committee, and we'll allow a bill to travel if you're prepared to do the following," whatever that following might be. It might be less time in debate in the House—whatever the case might be. That's how this House used to work.

I gave today a letter to the government House leader, and the letter is about the government's health bill, in regard to Bill 74. Let me read it, Madam Speaker, because it's related to this time allocation motion.

"In light of the significant and unprecedented changes proposed by Bill 74, Ontario's New Democrats believe that the House's consideration of the proposed legislation must include robust public consultation if we are to attempt to ensure health care reform meets the needs of Ontarians.

"To that end, we are proposing that the committee consultations for Bill 74 should be designed to incorporate two weeks of travelling hearings, held in communities across the province"—as we should have done with this particular bill when it comes to policing—"to ensure that the House gathers feedback from a broad cross-section of Ontarians—including patients, families and front-line health care workers—in order to better understand the implications of the bill.

"Given the reports that the bill is the most significant change to health care since the introduction of medicare, it only makes sense to take the time needed to get it right. New Democrats"—and this is the point—"are open to discussing ways that we can work together to make this important consultation a reality while minimizing the impact on House operations.

"As Bill 74 is now before the House, time is of the essence; we look forward to hearing from you soon."

It would have been the same thing when it came to this particular bill in regard to—they call it the COPS bill—Bill 68. If the government would have come to us, as we suggested, and said, "Listen, all right, we may consider your proposal in order to be able to travel the bill somewhat," we would have accommodated in some way in

order to be able to have those hearings, because we want bills to get proper vetting when it comes to people looking at them so that we are able to fix whatever problems that we have with the bills.

The government, in this case, is again time-allocating. They're going to allow only one day of public hearings, the week after we come back from the March break, followed by one day of clause-by-clause—which means to say, literally, you've got to listen to somebody on the first day and by the second day you have to have the amendments for the legislation drafted and brought before the committee to be dealt with.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's impossible.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, it is impossible. It just makes for bad legislation.

Some of the government members across the way sat in opposition with us when you had the Liberal administration in place, and they understand what I'm getting at: It makes for bad legislation. It just seems to me that a government would be well advised to make sure that you take the time to do proper consultations with the public when it comes to the actual legislative bill so that if there is a problem, you can identify the problem and, once you've identified it, fix it, so the bill does what it was intended to do. And if there are unintended consequences in the way that you drafted the bill that do something counter than what the bill should do, then it gives you a chance to fix it.

But what's this government doing? It's saying, "No, we're going to time-allocate because we're smarter than everybody." Well, I'm sorry, there's no government—and I don't care what the stripe is—that's smarter than everybody when it comes to drafting legislation. That's why the public is there. That's why the British parliamentary system has put in place a system of committees: in order to allow the public to have its say. I'm sure the police in Waterloo and Kitchener and Thunder Bay and Sudbury and Cornwall and Hamilton and different places would want to have a say on this.

You know what? You would probably have some people coming to this committee saying good things about you for a change. I don't know what you guys are afraid of. This is a bill that you're proud of. This is a bill that Conservatives would—are excited about—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was going to say something and you saw me pull it back, right? That's called control.

The point is, they're not even willing to go out there on what they see as good news. I think that especially those of you who are new members coming into this House and those of you who are not necessarily in cabinet need to realize the government is not doing you a favour here. Because guess what's going to happen? After four years of being here there's a little thing called an election. You're all going to have to go knock on doors with myself and other people to get re-elected, and the more you get it wrong, the harder it's going to be for you.

This is the thing that is not serving you well as members of the government, especially those outside of cabinet.

Those in cabinet are going to get stuck with the decisions because they were the decision-makers, but the rest of you are decision-makers within your own caucus and within this Legislature, and you have to utilize your authority at one point and say, "Hey, this is off."

1410

I'm good with this bill, but we need to travel. It is not right, and quite frankly, a disservice to democracy when we don't allow the public to have its say when it comes to this particular bill.

I want to get into—because this is the Police Services Act—some of the stuff that we heard today in regard to Mr. Blair being fired.

It wasn't all that long ago, when you think about it—at question period—that the minister stood in this House and said, "I don't know anything about this. Where's this coming from? I'm not going to comment on something that is a personnel matter and something I don't know about." Then she runs out and does a press conference to say, "Yes, in fact, there was an OIC that fired him. We just rubber-stamped it."

It went to cabinet; the decision went to cabinet. The person who is the deputy minister—which I'll get to in a minute—sent that to cabinet to be approved. Mr. Di Tommaso put together this action that cabinet had to sign off on, and the minister stood in the House in question period and said, "I don't know anything about this." It's like, "I know nothing." Remember that guy, Mr. Schultz, out of Hogan's Heroes, for those us of who are old enough? That's what it made me think of. She was like Colonel—was it Blake?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Colonel Klink.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It was Colonel Klink. It was just like, "I know nothing, I see nothing," said Schultz. And the colonel just went along with everything.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I did get that wrong. My point is, those who watched Hogan's Heroes probably remember what I was talking about.

But my point is, the minister knew, and she was in this House earlier today saying she didn't. Then she comes after her press conference and does a statement in the House which essentially confirms what I'm saying.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Unprecedented.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's pretty unprecedented, Madam Speaker.

Here's what has happened. The Premier decides that he wants to hire his friend to become the head of the OPP. There's a problem there, because as we all know—and we're talking about the Police Services Act here—when it comes to the police, there has to be a separation between the politicians, the police and the courts. It's not just a convention; it's the way our Constitution operates and how our system works. We cannot interfere with each other. We're the lawmakers; the police are the enforcers; and the courts are the ones who pronounce if the law has been followed or not followed.

What you've got is, you have the Premier of Ontario, who says, "I want to appoint my good friend Mr. Taverner to be the head of the OPP."

Do you know how many times there are going to be issues where the government is going to be investigated by the OPP? A whole bunch of times. I don't care which government it is. The Liberals in power had how many OPP investigations against them?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Five.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: They had five, right? Imagine, if you had been in opposition with us, which you were, and Mr. McGuinty or Ms. Wynne said, "I'll put my friend over there"—nod, nod, wink, wink—"and they're going to be the head of the OPP." You would have gone apoplectic on this side. You would have been completely apoplectic. You would have said, "That's not right. That can't happen. That's not the way it has to go." And you would have been right.

But now, again, to my point about members outside of cabinet: Those on the backbench of the government are sitting around here applauding the Premier every time he gets up and talks about appointing his friend Mr. Taverner. You're not doing yourselves any favours. You're going to be knocking on doors at the end of four years—

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the member for Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm listening intently to the respected member across the aisle, but we are debating Bill 68. We are also debating the motion put forth. I'm concerned that he is not just straying a little bit, but he's straying quite a bit outside the boundaries of what the intention of this debate is all about.

I would just ask, Madam Speaker, that you might direct the member to maybe tighten up his scope, so that we are specifically debating what is before us this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. I'm going to ask the member for Timmins to ensure that his comments are being tied to the time allocation motion.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Time allocation about Bill 68, which is the Police Services Act. I really appreciate your trying to help me, but what I'm trying to do is help you.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Well, help me help you.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm trying to help every backbench member in the government to say—at one point, you guys have got to be able to push back and say this is just a bad idea.

What we've got is Mr. Taverner, who is the choice of the Premier to be appointed as the OPP commissioner. Then today—and I won't even get to today—Mr. Blair, who is the acting deputy commissioner, has some issue with that over a number of—

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Stop the clock, please. I recognize the member from Perth-Wellington on a point of order.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Speaker, the member is drifting off the subject of time allocation, talking about other events here. I would ask you to please direct him back to the time allocation bill and stop this other stuff.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Timmins on the time allocation motion.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm taking my lead from the lead debate from the Conservatives, who only spoke about Bill 68 and never talked about time allocation once. I'm just following what you guys have set up.

My point is, Mr. Blair had issues when it came to what the Premier was doing with this appointment of Mr. Taverner. Now as a result, we find out today that Mr. Blair has been fired.

Madam Speaker, under the Police Services Act, there are provisions within the act that, quite frankly, deal with this kind of issue. There has to be a separation between the politics of the Legislature and the politics of the Premier's office and what happens in the operational side of the OPP—

Mr. Dave Smith: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Stop the clock, please. I recognize the member from Peterborough–Kawartha on a point of order.

Mr. Dave Smith: The member is imputing motive. Could you ask the member not to impute motive, please?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Timmins, and I'd just ask that you choose your words wisely, please, and speak to the time allocation motion.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I take that to heart, Madam Speaker. I was not intending on imputing motive. I'm just stating the facts of what happened.

The point that I'm trying to make here as it relates to, as they call it, the COPS bill, is that there are provisions within that bill to deal with the issue of how the police operate and what the police are able and not able to do.

I'm saying to my friends across the way, especially those outside of cabinet, we understand that once you become a cabinet minister, you have to support what the cabinet decides and you work together as a group. But the backbench also has a responsibility to sometimes steer the ship a little bit, to try to push the ship in the right direction. I'm just trying to say to the members across the way, you're not doing yourselves any favours by allowing the Premier to continue down this path in regard to what has happened with Mr. Taverner and what he's trying to do, and what happened with Mr. Blair today.

It was very passing strange, as I said earlier. The minister stood in the House during question period and said, "I know nothing. I saw nothing. I don't know what's going on." Then she goes out and does a press conference after and said, "Oh, well, yes." It was—what did she call it?—the Public Service Commission and the deputy minister, Mr. Di Tommaso, who did the firing, but she knows very well it was an order in council that empowered that decision.

I just want to explain politics 101 as it relates to time allocation.

An order in council is a decision of cabinet. The reason our process sends those decisions from the deputy minister and, for example, the Public Service Commission to cabinet is that they're the final check and balance: Is this

a good decision? Is this a bad decision? Is this something that should be allowed or not be allowed? Should we go in that direction or not? And cabinet approved it. That means to say there was a discussion.

Do you mean to tell me that this government allows items to go before it and there's no discussions at cabinet? That can't be. I don't believe that for one second. Of course there's a discussion.

Then, in the end, there is a decision by cabinet, which means to say it's either a consensus, where everybody stands around the table and says, "Yes, Premier, that's what we're going to do," or there's an actual vote, which means to say there a consent by cabinet.

So, in this case, we have a cabinet that has decided to allow Mr. Blair to be fired.

1420

What we're saying, as New Democrats, is there needs to be an investigation into this so that we shine the light on what is happening. Who's involved in these decisions? How did we get here? A person who decides to stand up against the Premier when it came to what was going on with Mr. Taverner is fired and that's okay? I don't think so. I think the reality is, as I said earlier, nobody believes that, Madam Speaker. Nobody believes that the Premier has no interest in having Mr. Blair fired or in hiring his friend to be the commissioner.

I want to read a letter dated February 28 from Rob Jamieson, president of the Ontario Provincial Police Association. It reads as follows—again, it's all provisions of Bill 68, which are tied to this time allocation:

"I write to you today to express concern over the recent reports in the media that have adversely impacted one of our members and may impact the reputation of the OPP." That's pretty darn serious, that you've got the Ontario Provincial Police Association worried about something the government did that will impact their reputation.

A person whose name was blanked out "was a close protection officer for Premier Ford. On the morning of February 27, 2019, he was advised that he was being stood down from his duties." This is in regard to the comments that were made against the protection of the police. That, I will argue—I probably can't go there. I will get myself going on that one.

To get back to the time allocation motion, the issue here is that the government has decided to time-allocate a bill that is 187 pages in length, if I remember correctly. I may be getting—it's one of the two bills, but it's a pretty thick one, about that thick. They're saying to the public out there, "You have to accept this bill as it is because we don't make any errors as a government. And if you allow this bill to get short shrift when it comes to time at committee where the public can comment, don't worry. We got it right." Who buys for one second that the Premier, Mr. Ford, and his cabinet get it right?

Has anybody noticed what they did to children with autism in this province? They were mad, Madam Speaker, when Dalton McGuinty, and Madam Wynne as the Premier, did what they did to children with autism. Parents were upset, so much so that Lisa MacLeod and a whole

bunch of my friends in this House stood up and opposed what the government was doing, and rightfully so. They are more than mad in the way they were against the Liberals. What the Liberals did was bad. The Liberals created a waiting list. We agree with the government: What the Liberals did was wrong. They created a waiting list where children who actually need ABA or IBI have to wait, and that is a problem. We agree with you. But what you've done is you've fixed the waiting list by taking everybody off it and saying, "Now, if you're getting services of IBI or ABA for your child, you'll lose it on April 1. By the way, there's no more list. You can go out and get tested, but there's nowhere for you to go to get services unless you buy the service yourself."

It's again the same kind of thing, Madam Speaker. The government is saying, "We know best." What I'm saying to the government across the way, especially those in the backbench, is that you've got to push back. You've got to, at one point, say, "Hey, I've got to get re-elected after a four-year term. If I've got parents with autistic children mad at me, I've got families that are related to autistic children mad at me, I've got women who are mad at me," for the latest thing that they just did where they're going to review pay equity—oh, my God, I can't believe that one. How many fights do you want to pick? They've done what they've done to midwives. It's just like First Nations, classroom sizes. Now we're hearing the Minister of Education today in the House talk about, "Well, we've got to make sure we've got the right teachers in the classroom." That's a buzz to say they're not going to use teachers but they are going to use something lesser to teach kids—

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: You're making that up.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We'll find out. The minister says I'm making it up, and I hope you're right. I hope you don't go where I think you're going. But when I hear the Minister of Education stand in the House today and say, "We're going to make sure we have the right teachers in the classroom," that sounds to me like either you want to change a collective agreement where seniority doesn't mean anything and you can pick who you want, or you want to use unqualified people in JK and certain positions within the school.

My point is that the government is picking all kinds of fights, and they'd be well served to allow their bills to travel. In this case, this is a bill that the government is proud of. I've heard the government get up—as a matter of fact, the first speaker on this bill didn't speak to time allocation but spoke for 10 or 15 minutes about the bill. I didn't object because that's fine; it's about the bill. I'm okay with that.

You can't, in the end, Madam Speaker, expect that the public is going to be with you come election day if all you do is do things that run contrary to what they want and then you don't listen to them when they're trying to talk to you. The government would be very well served to allow bills to travel. That's why, for example, on this bill we suggested that the bill should go to committee and it should travel somewhat in order to allow the public to have its say when it comes to the health bill.

The largest health transformation, says the government, in the last 50 years is being proposed by this government by way of the new bill that they just tabled in this House. If that's true—and I would agree that it's a pretty monumental change—you should get out there and talk to people. The government says, "Oh, no, we've been consulting." I was reading all the papers on the weekend online, where doctors, nurses, hospital administrators and others said, "We haven't been asked. Nobody talked to us about this." The first they saw it was when the bill got tabled; that's when they got to see what was going on.

I met with a health organization on Friday in my riding. I'm not going to say who it was because I don't want to—the government being the way they are these days. They were saying, "Listen, we think what this means is that an entity such as ours, which is a not-for-profit public organization providing health care in the city of Timmins, is going to end up being managed out of a place like Sudbury or North Bay." I've got nothing against people in Sudbury or North Bay, but I want my health services managed in my local community, as my friend from Timiskaming-Cochrane does or my friends in the rest of our caucus do—and, I would argue, you. You're not doing yourselves any favours by not sending bills out to committee and allowing the bills to be debated.

I want to make one other point, and I know that our friend the member from—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Waterloo.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —Waterloo is going to want to speak to this, and I believe our friend from Timiskaming-Cochrane as well, so if you guys can leave each other a bit of time.

The time for clause-by-clause—and this really has to be said. The way that you've drafted this time allocation motion more or less says that you're not serious about any kind of meaningful change. You're saying that March 19 is the day that we're going to have the committee hearings, which is a Tuesday. By Thursday, we've got to do clause-by-clause. That means to say you finish on Tuesday night, you've listened to your last presentation at 6 o'clock—yes, from 6 o'clock; I'm just looking at the time allocation. You have to draft your amendments, and there's a cut-off for that.

The point is, you're in committee a little bit more than 36 hours later. It's not enough time to draft thoughtful amendments on what you've heard when it comes to something you may not have been thinking you're going to hear when it comes to what's being said at committee by a deputant. So you've got these amendments that you're going to be trying to draft lickety-split and then you've got one day to deal with clause-by-clause.

Let's say we ended up with 100 amendments, and you literally only get through about 20 of them. The rest of the amendments will be deemed to have been passed and read into the record, which means to say there's no debate and no discussion on the rest of the amendments. The very way that you're designing this bill is making for errors to happen.

Some of you in that caucus worked, as I did and as my good friend Mr. Vanthof did, in the private sector. If I was

to run a business like that, I'd go broke. You can't run a business like that, where you say, "I'm going to short-shrift the process to the point that I can make errors. Once the error is made, I have to live with it," because at the end you would have to pay for that error, if it's your business. You would have to pay for it out of your profits, or you'd have to pay out of your line of credit. You can't operate that way.

1430

The government who purports to be really good business people and, "We know how to run government more efficiently because we're business people"—no business would ever run a government the way you guys are running it, when it comes to drafting legislation. A business would actually do market research. They would look at the market and decide, is there a niche to be filled? They would decide how they can fill that niche. Is it viable? Is there a return on investment? How much more staffing do I need? How much is the cost at the end of the day? Do I make a profit? They look at all of those things. And then when they enact it, there's a campaign to support the new product or the new service by way of advertising, word of mouth or whatever it might be, and eventually you've got the new product out in the field.

But you guys are saying somebody can come up with a harebrained idea on Monday morning, and all of a sudden you're going to spend a bunch of money today to put it place by Thursday afternoon, and that's it. That's not the way to run the legislative process. The Legislature is designed in such a way that you should take a little bit longer passing your legislation through.

Let me give this example, and I'll take the rest of the time for my colleagues. When I first got here, along with Mr. Wilson and Mr. Arnott, a bill would be introduced in the fall. We'd sometimes have a very short debate at second reading, sometimes longer, depending, but we never had a bill that was substantive and passed committee and third reading in the same session. It just didn't happen. There was an understanding, because there was no time allocation, that, "All right. This is a substantial bill," like your COPS bill—you would bring something like that in the House. The opposition would say, "Okay, we're not terribly opposed. We'll do two days of second reading. We need 10 days of hearings or five days of hearings," or whatever it might be—sometimes as much as three weeks. It depended on the bill. But that always happened in the intersession. When you had your break, let's say, in January or February, the bill would go out and travel, or if it was in the summer, it would travel in July or August. The idea was to give the public their say.

We found errors in government-drafted bills all the time, and we would correct those bills and those errors by way of the process. Listen, there's not a government in the world that drafts legislation without making an error. That's a reality. They're not as brilliant as the Minister of Natural Resources, who knows how to draft a bill at the drop of the hat.

But the process that the Legislature is based on, the British parliamentary system, is that you take your time in

order to draft the bill and have ample time for debate in the House so that members can put their points of view on the record. That informs what you're going to do in committee hearings when it comes to what you hear from the public. Then you come back and you do your clause-by-clause, which used to take—back then, you could be here at Queen's Park for four or five days dealing with clause-by-clause, because amendments were taken seriously. When I sat in government and we had government bills, often the Liberal or Tory opposition would have amendments to our bills, and we would accept their amendments because they were right—not always, but when they were right, we'd accept their amendments. Who lost in that case?

I'll give you a good example. The sustainable forestry development act, as the Minister of Natural Resources knows, is still the bill that we manage our forests with. That bill was strengthened as a result of the work of the opposition.

Mr. Will Bouma: What about zebra mussels?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That wasn't us. Zebra mussels was a whole other issue. Yes, that was a whole other one. That was my bill. I copied that from Michael Harris, Sr.

But my point is, the bill was strengthened as a result of the work of the committee members, both government and opposition. Chris Hodgson, a member on committee at the time who is now at the Ontario Mining Association, was instrumental in bringing forward amendments that strengthened that bill. Since then, that bill was somewhat amended, but the basic idea of forest management and forest management planning and the harvesting process has been the system that we introduced as New Democrats, that was supported by Conservatives in power for eight years, supported by Liberals in power for 15 years and, I would argue, supported by Conservatives yet, because we got it right.

You're not doing yourselves any favours by running bills through the House and sending them through committee with a day or two days of hearings and a day or two of clause-by-clause. You're going to have problems, and you're going to pay for the problems when it goes to knocking on doors in four years. Trust me. That's what's going to happen.

So I say to the government across the way: You have a chance of being able to amend this amendment, if you want. We would certainly be prepared to allow you to amend your own motion to allow for more time for committee hearings so that we can hear from the public—not just here in Toronto—and allow some time in clause-by-clause so that people can have ample time to amend the legislation in a meaningful way.

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

Ms. Jill Dunlop: I'm proud to be able to speak to this bill today, and I want to thank the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for addressing these important issues.

Madam Speaker, we made a promise to the people of this province that we would work to make Ontario safe, stand up for victims and hold criminals accountable for

their actions. The previous government's legislation on policing, Bill 175, actively undermined policing efforts and public trust, which is critical to effective policing.

Our government believes in the principle of fairness and due process for our police officers. It's simple. We depend on our officers to keep us protected every single day. They should be able to rely on their government to have their backs and they should be confident in knowing that we are grateful for their service. It's unfortunate that police officers didn't have that type of support from the previous government, but they do now.

With our government's proposed legislation, Bill 68, the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act, 2019, we will be enhancing police oversight—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the member for Windsor–Tecumseh on a point of order.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Why, thank you, Speaker. I've listened intently to the debate so far this afternoon and I've heard three or four members of the government stand up and bring my opposition House leader to a point of order, saying he wasn't speaking to time allocation on the bill in front of us, and that's fair. I would just like the same opportunity to bring to the member from Simcoe North's attention that she has to speak to time allocation on the bill in front of us, and nothing else.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you for the point of order—

Interjections.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: At least make reference to it from time to time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you for the point of order. Back to the member for Simcoe North.

Ms. Jill Dunlop: Thank you very much, and thank you for pointing that out, actually. As I was speaking to Bill 68, I want to reiterate that the deadline for requests to appear is 5 p.m. on Tuesday, March 5, 2019—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Which is tomorrow.

Ms. Jill Dunlop:—which is tomorrow; thank you.

We are committed to building a safer province, and doing so in a way that respects all Ontarians, including our hard-working police officers.

Some of the changes we are bringing forward are just common-sense pieces like working to address concerns that SIU investigations take too long by mandating that inspectors endeavour to complete an investigation within 120 days and having actual police officers show up when a person calls 911. Believe it or not, that wasn't mandated under the previous government.

The previous government's bill on policing didn't guarantee some of the most basic expectations for the citizens of Ontario. The Liberals allowed for outsourcing of work to non-police entities. Our government is changing that by ensuring that a trained, accountable police officer will show up when you call 911 and need assistance with law enforcement, emergency response or maintaining public peace. As a government that is committed

to restoring public confidence in government, we know how vital it is to have public trust in policing.

This bill resonates with me not only as a citizen of Ontario who sees the tremendous work the police do in my community and all over Ontario, but as someone who has a partner working in law enforcement. I have seen firsthand the constant dedication of the brave men and women who serve in rural areas across Simcoe North.

I'd like to remind those who are watching: If you are going to committee, remember that each witness will receive up to eight minutes for their presentation, followed by 12 minutes, divided equally amongst the recognized parties for questioning at that time.

I am also aware of the potential danger that my partner and those who protect this province, just like he does, face every time they leave their homes to serve their communities. Police officers, along with their families, sacrifice a lot in order to serve and protect the people of Ontario. They should be an inspiration to us all, and deserve our heartfelt appreciation.

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Our government heard from the front-line workers, and we heard from them directly, about how the old oversight system was broken, confusing and slow. It didn't work for the police, and it most certainly did not work for the public.

With this piece of proposed legislation, we will be updating and improving the process of the special investigations unit and reducing duplication. Our bill would strengthen the independence and focus the mandate of the special investigations unit. By establishing the SIU as a provincial agency accountable to the Attorney General, public trust and confidence in policing will increase as a result of increased transparency. A more independent SIU will create a single window for complaints, reducing inefficient delays and ensuring more accountability.

Under the previous government's bill, too much time is spent on unnecessary investigations that treat police officers as suspects. This legislation will also change the requirements for SIU investigations. Under this bill, police officers will not be punished with unnecessary investigation that treats them as if they are guilty for trying to save lives in situations like suicide attempts and drug overdoses. Investigations will only occur where a designated authority reasonably believes that the official's actions may have been a contributing factor in serious injury or death. Less unnecessary time will be spent on the investigations of officers. Investigations will ideally be completed within 120 days. To encourage transparency, longer investigations will require explanation from the SIU.

Bill 68 will also remove the previous bill's requirement for the SIU to investigate civilians who may have been involved in criminal conduct resulting in an incident along with an official. By removing this requirement, the SIU will be more efficient. It will be able to concentrate on its core mandate, with no obligation to investigate conduct that does not fall under its authority.

I would like to remind those who are coming to committee that the deadline for filing written submissions will be 6 p.m. this Thursday, March 7.

By making the SIU more independent, this legislation will make oversight more transparent, efficient, and respectful to police, while increasing public trust in the process. Bill 68 will improve the impact of the SIU on both our police officers and the people of Ontario.

We will also be making systemic racism, human rights and Indigenous cultural training mandatory for new officers. This is an important aspect of this bill and is welcome news for my riding of Simcoe North, a riding that has two First Nations communities—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the member from Windsor-Tecumseh on a point of order.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I wonder if we can time-allocate discussion on the bill and get back to the time allocation motion that speaks to the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I'll just caution the member from Simcoe North to ensure that your remarks tie back into the time allocation motion.

Ms. Jill Dunlop: Yes, I was. I mentioned the deadline and also the committee dates.

Interjections.

Ms. Jill Dunlop: No, several times, I have. Yes, I have. I'd like to talk about the wonderful First Nation communities in my riding—the communities of Chippewas of Rama First Nation, and Beausoleil First Nation on Christian Island—as this bill applies directly to them as well.

Our government is committed to providing First Nations with options to request a First Nation police service board or a First Nation OPP board to oversee the delivery of policing in their communities. As my colleague MPP Park stated last week in the House, this part of our legislation is not an afterthought.

Again, for those who are seeking to come to committee, I would like to reiterate that the requests deadline is 5 p.m. tomorrow evening, Tuesday, March 5. Tuesday March 5, at 5 p.m., is the deadline for requests.

Our government is responding to Justice Tulloch's recommendations that we "prepare and adopt a diversity plan to ensure that the members of the police service reflect the diversity of the area for which the board has policing responsibility." We believe that this will result in a stronger community safety partnership between the government, the police and the people.

This proposed legislation also introduces changes to the Coroners Act to enhance public safety and improve service delivery. We will necessitate that any items seized as part of a coroner's death investigation be given to a member of a police service for safekeeping. This will ensure that all seized items are in the most secure location possible.

As I said, the deadline for requests is tomorrow evening at 5 p.m., but also, the deadline for filing written submissions is 6 p.m. on Thursday, March 7—Thursday of this week.

We will also be introducing a new investigative screening provision to allow coroners to have access to information like medical records, so that they are better able to investigate deaths and take into consideration the complete

picture of a deceased person's health history. Our government understands that retrospective analysis of deaths over time can identify common factors and trends that could help to prevent further deaths and improve the health and safety of Ontarians.

Improving service delivery across the province has been a clear commitment from our government from day one. That's why I also think it's essential to point out that with this proposed legislation, we would remove the requirement for regional coroners to be a resident in the area named for their appointment. I think that's important, because it would assist the Office of the Chief Coroner in recruiting the most suitable candidates for positions. By removing this restriction, we would be addressing potential gaps and ensuring effective and efficient services across the province.

Interjections.

Ms. Jill Dunlop: As my colleagues are saying here, I'm reminding them that there is a 5 p.m. deadline on March 5 for requests, and also for filing written submissions—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Stop the clock, please. I recognize the member for Windsor-Tecumseh on a point of order.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Yes, on a point of order: I believe that in our legislative policies, when a member gets too repetitive and starts repeating the same information over and over and over, it's time to move on in the debate. It's a time-allocated bill. The only connection to time allocation is telling us of the deadline, and I've heard it now five or six times. If we can't move the debate along and talk about time allocation, Speaker, I think you could do that for us.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you. I'm going to caution the member from Simcoe North to ensure that your comments tie to the time allocation motion.

Ms. Jill Dunlop: Thank you. I'm about to wrap up anyway, to share my time.

Interjection: What was that timeline again?

Ms. Jill Dunlop: Well, I have a couple times for you.

Again, I had mentioned before that requests to appear are 5 p.m. on Tuesday, March 5, but as well, the Clerk of the Committee will provide a list of all interested presenters to each member of the subcommittee and their designates following the deadline for requests to appear by 6 p.m. on Tuesday, March 5.

I'd like to wrap it up by saying that in the past our police officers were being treated like suspects. Even the heroic police officers who responded to the Danforth shooting last year were subjected to a six-month SIU investigation. Our government believes that police officers deserve our gratitude and respect, not our suspicion and scorn. That's why, with this bill, our government is providing police with the tools, resources and support they need to do their jobs.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to join this very interesting debate today here in the House. I would say that

I'm sure that my friend the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services has had better days. I will say that, because I watched a very dramatic situation unfold here in the Legislature this morning, which was something that I've actually never seen before in this House.

It's interesting that we are here debating time allocation on the modernization of the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act, otherwise known as the COPS act, on a day when the language that the government members are using to describe police services, to describe police officers in the province of Ontario—the member from Simcoe North has just said that our police officers are an inspiration to us all, deserve our heartfelt appreciation and should not be met with suspicion and scorn. I'm pretty sure that Superintendent Brad Blair might want to actually have a conversation about those comments, I have to say.

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Here we are, Madam Speaker—

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Madam Speaker, I can't even hear myself.

As we debate the limiting of the process by which the public can weigh in on this important piece of legislation—as you've heard, today the vote will happen on Bill 68. Debate is totally shut down. There's a sharp deadline of tomorrow at 5 p.m. whereby people can apply to weigh in on this piece of legislation. The very next day, we must go through the piece of legislation clause-by-clause. If the government were truly interested in strengthening and modernizing and ensuring that police officers—all voices within the police forces in this great province—are respected, they would have a fulsome process by which people can weigh in.

I have to say, Madam Speaker, it is a sad day in this Legislature when the minister who is responsible for shepherding and navigating this piece of legislation through this provincial Legislature is dealing with a situation whereby she said in the House earlier today, "I will not be commenting, nor should anyone else" comment on the firing of Brad Blair. She says, "I will not be doing it." And then she goes to a press conference and she says, "I will not be commenting—nor should anyone else—on private" human resources issues. It shouldn't be a private human resource issue when it's a public service being questioned, Madam Speaker. This is where we are right now in this place, in this province.

Then, unprecedented—I have been here for seven years and I've never seen this—the minister comes into this House and gives a number of private issues around the firing of Superintendent Brad Blair. She says, "Why was Brad Blair fired?" In the news conference at 12:30, she wouldn't say, and she denied knowing why. At 1:30 in the Legislature, she has lots of details all of a sudden. She says that he breached his oath, he violated his duties and he released confidential private information—

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Stop the clock, please. I recognize the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington on a point of order.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, I would ask that if she wants to talk about certain issues—we know what we're debating. We're debating Bill 68 and the time allocation of that. I listened to the member from Timmins earlier, and now I'm listening to the member from Waterloo. I would ask that they somewhat stay focused on this entire issue and don't bring up other stuff that has absolutely nothing to do with this particular bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Thank you for the point of order. I will just remind the member for Waterloo to tie comments back to the time allocation motion.

Ms. Catherine Fife: The Police Services Act deals with investigations into other police officers. In fact, the member from Simcoe North said that they are going to fast-track and they don't want the SIU to take too long on these investigations of police officers within the police force. And yet, we can't get a straight answer on who started the investigation into Brad Blair. The minister would not answer it today.

The Police Services Act should set a clear path, a clear course, as to when questions of ethics come forward, questions of behaviour, and questions of confidentiality come forward. This is what the Police Services Act is all about, and this government is limiting debate on that very act, Madam Speaker.

We are debating time allocation in this House on a day when we have seen an unprecedented public firing of the OPP commissioner for the province of Ontario, and the government and the minister will not be transparent or open as to how that investigation even started.

This act that we will be debating for one day in committee by going clause-by-clause—we only have one day to invite the police chiefs of Ontario here, and I'm pretty sure that the head of the OPP would like to come here. Rob Jamieson, president of the Ontario police association, just wrote a letter late last week—this has to do with the dismissal of the OPP officer who was on detail with the Premier. He says that there was no clear and open and transparent process by which this individual member of the OPP was dismissed and ordered to stand down.

But the Police Services Act, especially around whistleblower protection, Madam Speaker, needs to be very clear. You will have a whole new group of stakeholders who want to come to committee—this one day of committee.

Listen: This is what the OPP president says. The name of the officer has been blacked out. This "was a close protection officer for Premier Ford. On the morning of February 27, 2019, he was advised that he was being stood down from his duties." Where are his rights as a police officer? "We can only assume that this action is the direct result of his name being mentioned in multiple media reports surrounding the filing of documents with the court by lawyers for OPP Deputy Commissioner Brad Blair in relation to his civil action regarding the province's Ombudsman."

Never have we ever seen an OPP commissioner go to civil court and the Ombudsman to challenge the hiring process. It has always traditionally been a very public and

transparent process because it all speaks to trust, Madam Speaker. As our House leader has said, there is a reason why we have a separation of politicians in this Legislature—so that we do not interfere in the police services. Well, clearly, anybody who has been watching this House, anybody who has been paying attention—and thank goodness the media were at that terrible press conference earlier today, because nobody was buying that this government has nothing to do with the firing of Brad Blair. Nobody is buying it. You can walk that back as far as you want to.

The time allocation piece today really is like gasoline on the fire. The timing of it is quite something. It's almost a beautiful thing in some respects, because it allows us to address the processes and the schemes that we are dealing with in this Legislature. There is a completely new culture in this place since we've had this Premier.

This separation between politicians and police and the court system—there is a reason why that separation exists. And when citizens in this great province read that the very person who fully exposed the unprecedented van purchase—there are lots of names, as you know, Madam Speaker; we don't need to go into all of them—exposed the fact that the special order was being placed—there was no good rationale for that, especially in these times of austerity.

More disturbingly, I think, for us is that one particular member of the OPP detail that is charged with protecting the Premier was singled out, ostracized and asked to stand down. Yet, members of the PC caucus stand up and say that these are police officers, that they have a difficult job to do—I'm very sure that it is a very difficult job on the Premier's OPP detail; I'm fairly certain of that—and that all OPP officers and officers in the province of Ontario are an inspiration to us all and deserve our heartfelt appreciation.

Well, how can you say that in this Legislature and then follow through on a process whereby the Premier hires his best friend, and the deputy minister under the community safety and correctional services ministry plays a role in removing a very courageous leader in the police services, Officer Brad Blair, who I think did a service to this province.

This morning our leader said, "It's a chilling day in Ontario when a well-respected OPP deputy commissioner, who dedicated his life to this province, is fired for standing up for the integrity and independence of our provincial police" services. That's what our leader said this morning.

You cannot reconcile this time allocation motion, where you are stifling our rights and responsibilities as legislators to engage in a truly transparent process in trying to make Bill 68, the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act, a better piece of legislation. We will need more time with this legislation, given what has transpired today.

For the government to stand in their place and say, "Yes, tomorrow, March 5, by 5 o'clock, you get the opportunity to put your name forward. If you have concerns about the modernization of the Police Services Act in the

province of Ontario, you can put your name forward, but we only have one day for you, and then we're only going to listen to you for those 15 minutes. Then somehow, the next day, we're going to amend this piece of legislation."

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Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's like a Seinfeld episode: "No soup for you."

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes, I know: "No soup for you." No democracy for you, not today—no democracy for you today.

And I want to say, and our House leader pointed this out very well, that process matters. When I look at the members from the PC caucus that I served with for over six years, this would be your number one complaint as the official opposition then.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: That's right. You would bring down the hand, the fist would hit the table, and you would say, "You are doing a great disservice to the citizens in my riding, or in the north or in the south—across the whole province—by limiting debate on legislation." Process matters, and so does trust. I think that this is a very limited process. It's a time-allocated process. The Liberals did this all the time. That is why we are in the mess that we are in—that, and the cash-for-access. I have to say, cash-for-access really did a number on how policy was created in this province.

Interjection: They're back again.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes, they're back; they're back by popular demand.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Actually, I was just heckled by someone who said that I supported the former cash-for-access. In fact, I was on the committee where I travelled with the official opposition for almost a whole summer just so we could expose where personal, private, corporate, union interests were affecting policy. We all agreed in this House, including the members who are now on the government side, that having people pay to have access to politicians, particularly when they were specific to your critic portfolio, was very damaging to our democratic process. But this is wide open again. The new rules in the province of Ontario—we like to say, "Liberal, Tory, same old story." I'm telling you that I've never seen it so clearly as I have today.

But there are certain things that actually have become very clear to us on this side of the House: that the rules don't matter. The rules are being crafted on the back of a napkin, in a bar, I might say, sometimes, because—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Or maybe inside that van. It's inside the van with the reclining seat.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Maybe on the leather reclining couch.

So when you see a motion that is before us today that asks us, as legislators, to just accept that we're only going to get one day of consultation where people can bring their voices to their place—this is the people's House. I would like to remind the government that this is the people's House. You always have to say, "For the people," and I

always say, “If you need to be reminded that you’re here for the people, you’re in the wrong line of business, my friend.” You’re certainly not here for the children who are on the autism spectrum, and you’re certainly not here for women in the province of Ontario, because you’re pushing back pay equity progress, which was very limited, to say the least.

As we debate this time allocation on a day when we have learned that the interim OPP commissioner, Brad Blair, was fired from his position, this harsh disciplinary action comes after he raised legitimate concerns about the process surrounding the proposed appointment of Ron Taverner as the next OPP commissioner. Do not think that the people of this province don’t care about this issue. They see nepotism for what it is, especially when that nepotism is facilitated by a whole new job description so your friend can get the job. Honestly, the fact that the OPP commissioner, Brad Blair, has requested assistance from the Ombudsman—because he has correctly identified that this is an issue of trust in the province of Ontario.

Hon. John Yakubuski: The Integrity Commissioner.

Ms. Catherine Fife: The Integrity Commissioner—my mistake.

You can’t dismiss the fact that what Brad Blair has done—standing up to a Premier who feels that the rules do not apply to him—is a brave and courageous thing to do. I would like to say sincerely to my friends that I served with for so long that we are ready to see some of you stand up to that obstinance of policy in this House, because we also have a shared responsibility to craft legislation that will work.

Right now you have Bill 68, which we’re going to get very little public input on—one day. You get until tomorrow at 5 o’clock to actually get your name on the list. Anybody who has gone through the process of trying to amend legislation knows that you can’t do that overnight and you can’t do that effectively within the day. So you will, at the end of the day, after all of the rhetoric and all of the “Rah, rah, we love police. But we’re going to fire this guy over here”—when it is all said and done, you will have a piece of legislation which is deeply flawed. I think that that is a great disservice to the people who we serve.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We just got another time allocation motion.

Ms. Catherine Fife: We just got another time allocation on Bill 66.

These are the new rules. There’s a new sheriff in town, and he doesn’t want to let democracy get in the way of good legislation. It really is quite something.

We have the Hansard from all of the members on the other side who railed against this practice, did they not? They railed against this practice day after day. They felt that it was a great fault in the process. We agree that it’s a fault in the process, because if you are not truly inclusive as you craft legislation, as you draft it, first of all—remember, this was a piece of legislation that was paused and saw very little consultation, so it was never really meant to be a truly inclusive process. That is really disappointing for the people who understand that there are some fundamental issues of trust in this province in our communities.

I think the chiefs of police for the province of Ontario have indicated some serious concerns with this. I wonder if the chiefs of police are actually going to get on the list of delegations for this piece of legislation.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: You’d better hurry up.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes. Get on the phone right now. Call now to see a little bit of democracy in the Ontario Legislature.

It is ironic that the Conservatives have put forward Bill 68 in order to restore the public’s trust in police—but then we saw the really unprecedented actions that have happened today. I think that the media is going to play a very important role in how this piece of legislation plays itself out, but also how it is connected with how the Premier’s office in the province of Ontario is acting and ruling. The more and more time I spend at the doors—I’m very thankful that the people of Waterloo are paying close attention.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Same in Hamilton.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Same in Hamilton, and certainly in Toronto and London and Windsor and Kingston. When we are at the doors, people do not like the way that this Premier is hiring people. Remember, this is the Premier who said that there will be no job losses. I think Brad Blair would have something to say about that today, and also the 50 nurses; it’s actually 50 nurses who are gone from Grand River. It’s 40 full-time and then 10 who are set to retire, but they won’t be replaced. Nine therapists from Kids-Ability who are ABA therapists were laid off this week as well.

But more importantly, it’s how people are getting jobs. Maybe it’s not “more importantly,” but it’s equally disturbing that we are seeing job losses when we were promised “1,000%” no job losses. Then we see how people are getting jobs. How does a dude get a job at the EQAO that used to pay \$5,000, and now it’s—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It’s \$140,000.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Is it \$140,000?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Wow. That’s really fiscally responsible. Then to see David Cooke come in after the fact and say, “It’s not a full-time job”—I would admit that the minister and the Ministry of Education need some help, but I would ask them to put that \$140,000 toward the front-line workers in our schools, the PSWs, the ECEs, the educational assistants who are going to be needed in our school system as April 1 comes to play. Ironically, April 1 is April Fool’s Day. On April Fool’s Day, the autism strategy that funded intensive behavioural therapy ends and those kids will be shuffled into the public education system, be it French public, French Catholic, English Catholic or public, and the school boards have said that they are not ready.

Those are some jobs we’d like to see. We’d like to see the \$140,000 that the EQAO fellow got—

Interjection: The failed MPP.

Ms. Catherine Fife: —after he lost the election.

1510

There are a number, actually, of failed PC candidates who have secured employment in this government. I’m not

saying—those people may be good people. I'm just saying, how do you get a job like that? How do you go from earning \$5,000 a year to making \$140,000? How do you get out of the Premier's office and then get a job at Hydro or Ontario Energy? These are jobs that really erode the very fabric of trust. I know that members on the other side hear about this, because the media are doing their job. You know, media is the other opposition party. Do you remember when the Premier said that?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The fifth estate.

Ms. Catherine Fife: We do need the fifth estate in this province. I have to say, at the 12:30 press conference where the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services stood before the media today and said that this had nothing to do with her, even though it was an order in council, as our House leader has pointed out, even though her signature was on it—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's like the Minister of Health—

Ms. Catherine Fife: It was exactly like the Minister of Health. It's quite something. We still don't know.

I just want to go back to what has been said about Bill 68 in this debate today on the time allocation motion. The member from Simcoe North, again: These people, these police officers, are an inspiration to all of us—I guess not all police officers; just some of the people, some of the time—and that the special investigations unit should not take an extensive amount of time to investigate police officers.

Well, if that is true, and if the government is truly committed to Bill 68, then show us the process by which former OPP commissioner Brad Blair lost his job. Who started the investigation? What were the reasons? How does one go about investigating one of the top jobs in the province of Ontario? Who did the investigation? Was it started by the deputy minister for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, who happens to be a really good friend of Ron Taverner? Are there connections here?

Once people start asking questions about motive and about transparency, and once that door gets opened, the government can push against it as much as you want. You can try to limit the debate, as you are today with time allocation. You can limit the public consultation. When you say one day for hearings and one day for clauses, and you've got until tomorrow to register, do you know what we call that? We call that drive-by consultation. Put it on your T-shirt, put it on a little thing on your desk: "For the people, but it's drive-by consultation."

When you follow through on a process like this, you actually are not strengthening the legislation. And limiting our voices as colleagues, as fellow legislators who were elected to bring the voice of our constituents to this place to every piece of legislation, is completely and utterly disrespectful. It's disrespectful of us as colleagues, but more importantly, it's disrespectful to the people that we serve and the ridings that we serve.

I am really hopeful that the chiefs of police get to weigh in, for instance, on the suspension penalties that are part of Bill 68. I know that Maureen Trask, the woman who

inspired missing persons legislation which is part of Bill 68 and whose son Daniel Trask went missing in the forests of Temagami—it took personal and private resources to find him because there was no criminal investigation; he just went missing. Just like the 368 missing people currently in the province of Ontario.

There are families and voices that need to be heard on this piece of legislation so that we get it right. It has taken five years of debate on missing persons legislation in this place, and to have you drop the ball intentionally and close off the opportunity for Ontarians to be part of this legislation and to limit the debate and to limit the consultation is really such a disservice to the people who have been fighting so hard to have missing persons legislation be part of this act.

Imagine being a mother and losing your son and turning your grief into a progressive piece of legislation, to then see it meander through this House and then be denied the opportunity to come to the Ontario Legislature and give your feedback. Imagine the level of grief that it would take to continue down that path, as Maureen Trask has all of these years. Think of the voices that are not part of that missing persons legislation, like the Indigenous community, like the Alzheimer Society, which has genuine concerns about seniors who have dementia and who go missing but where there isn't a criminal investigation.

There is so much to say. I think our House leader outlined the procedural processes by which good legislation is crafted and how this House has traditionally operated. To say that there is a new sheriff in town who doesn't need to play by the rules and isn't very concerned about the democratic responsibility that we all have is really, I think, a dark day for the province of Ontario.

Our leader called it "chilling" that the OPP commissioner, Brad Blair, was fired today, as we are debating time allocation of the modernization of the Police Services Act. Quite honestly, it is something that I never thought would happen in this place, because when the police services are in our communities, that trust is key to their safety and it's key to the safety of the community. It strengthens our justice system when it is done well.

For those who have missed most of this debate, I just want to say, as our leader did this morning, that Brad Blair did a brave thing to come forward. It looks like he has lost his job because he spoke out about a practice that was not ethical and that was not in the best interest of the people of this province. For that, New Democrats thank him, and we will challenge and try to make this legislation as strong as it possibly can be within the constraints that you have placed on the official opposition today.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: I would like to thank everybody for being here this afternoon. I think it's a testament to the last speaker. I'd like to thank the people who are here, and I wonder: Maybe you need something to do. It's the middle of the afternoon, and we're trying to get through the afternoon, or perhaps get through the winter.

Speaker, I really sincerely welcome this opportunity to make a few comments and to stress the importance of

time-allocating this legislation. When I consider our police, when I consider the proposed legislation itself, Bill 68, and when I consider the time allocation of that particular bill, Bill 68, I think of a saying when I think of the police: “We don’t know how good we have it.” I say that having over the years travelled in something like 60 countries. I have seen an awful lot of interactions in many, many countries and many neighbourhoods between the police and the public. I was involved in some of those interactions. As you can appreciate, much of the policing in much of the world—I don’t know whether we still use the term “Third World” or not. I think of the Middle East and I think of South America. The lack of trust between people in those countries with respect to people in uniform, whether it’s police or soldiers—in many cases, in military dictatorships, you don’t see many police; you see soldiers. Again, what we have in Ontario—we’re blessed. For that reason—that’s pretty well my train of thought.

I used to work in Toronto years ago. Back then, there was the expression “Cops are tops.” They stopped using that later on. It was picked up by the bike gangs and other groups, and it lost some its public relations appeal. But that expression, to my mind—I think of Toronto’s finest. I think of our officers locally, all of the officers in both Haldimand county and Norfolk county and our OPP. From my perspective—and one’s perspective changes as you get older—I see them as our friends. They are our protectors. They are the protectors of law-abiding people and are really quite instrumental, along with other first responders, in making the province of Ontario a better place.

1520

In my view, every day our police do a good job. They keep us safe. Often, they do it in a very silent way, behind the scenes. Much of their work is prevention. You don’t see prevention. You can’t measure prevention. All too often, they’re required to put themselves in harm’s way, and they are required, on occasion, to make those difficult—within a second—life-and-death decisions, decisions made within the blink of an eye. So no matter what, in my view, in the province of Ontario we can count on our officers for protection.

I would like to take this opportunity during this time allocation debate to make it very clear, to personally express my support for law enforcement, as well as to reinforce our government’s commitment to the health and well-being of our province’s first responders. There’s no doubt the contributions of police officers help to keep our families safe. They keep our cities, our streets—and, as I can attest, when needed, they are there to keep us safe out on the backroads, those of us who live out in the sticks many, many miles from a detachment.

We have a government in power now—one of our major goals is to ensure the security of our people. It’s a fundamental responsibility. As we know, before the last election, the previous government passed Bill 175. I’ve heard the expression today about “bad legislation.” Bill 175 was bad legislation. That’s why we introduced Bill 68, the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act, also known as the COPS act. It’s got a bit of a ring to it. It’s a

key part of our promise to make Ontario safer, stand up for victims and hold criminals to account. To that end, I feel we have to move forward. We have to get on with this legislation as soon as possible.

One of our major goals is to restore fairness and to restore respect for policing, as well as enhancing oversight—very important, the other side of it; there are checks and balances—enhancing government training and transparency. With respect to respect—and I think this has been posed in previous debates. Just imagine an officer who is asked to work in a system that doesn’t trust you. It’s bad enough, in so many other jurisdictions, when the people don’t trust you, but when your own system—your supervisory structures, the management structures—does not place trust in you; for example, you face automatic investigation for doing your job, including trying to save a life.

The special investigations unit, the SIU—these investigations can hang on for months on end. From what I’m told, you’re not entitled to a fair hearing when facing discipline, and it seems that fairness is not a principle of this system. It’s a system that’s opaque, convoluted, and lacks transparency. Much of what we have been hearing is that this present climate was created by Bill 175, and it really makes it difficult for officers to do their job.

Bill 175 has developed a system that really serves no one. It’s not necessarily serving the police and, by extension, it’s not really serving the rest of us. It makes the jobs of officers, the chiefs and the police services boards more complicated and, by extension, puts us in the position of being less secure. This is what I consider really regrettable: It further removes us from the police. As I mentioned, it drives a wedge between those in uniform and the public. I’ve personally seen that in Argentina. I’ve seen it in Syria. I’ve seen it in Indonesia and El Salvador, more recently. Trust me, we do not want to go there.

Police are the first to say that public trust is essential for them to do their job, and of course the public would say oversight is key in maintaining that kind of trust. But the old oversight system is not working. It’s confusing; it’s slow. It’s not working for anybody.

One goal, and we do this with other ministries, is to create one window for public complaints and eliminate the duplication, the triplication, and truly focus on the mandate of the SIU.

Bill 68, the COPS Act, was introduced by the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, and really exemplifies our commitment to restore confidence in the men and women in uniform. Again, they keep our cities safe; they keep our countryside safe.

One of the most important improvements, in my mind, through Bill 68 is to streamline and strengthen the SIU. We heard over and over again from families that the SIU is a waste of time; it wastes energy; they’re investigating the wrong things; they drain valuable resources that could be focused on stopping actual criminal activity.

There’s no question: Police deserve our gratitude. They clearly deserve our respect. I heard this expression earlier today: “They do not deserve our suspicion and our scorn.”

Go to Libya if you want to see that. Go to Bolivia; I've seen that in Bolivia. Go to Guatemala. If you want to see scorn for officers, go elsewhere, not to Ontario.

Our goal, obviously, is to provide the police with the kinds of tools, the resources and the support they need, very simply, to do their job; to treat them fairly; and through this legislation, the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act, to ensure that we all remain partners.

I suppose I should be wrapping up fairly soon here. There is probably one other thing I would like to touch on.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: You've got lots of time.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Somebody just mentioned I've got a bit of time.

Here are a few examples of why we've got to move on, why this is time-allocated.

If a police officer tries to stop a suicide and he's unsuccessful, he's treated like a suspect. If an officer is on the scene, and perhaps there's a heart attack and someone passes away, they're treated like a suspect. They maybe had very little contact or no contact with that individual in that unfortunate situation. If an officer does respond to a violent crime and perhaps tries to perform CPR and is unable to save a life, they're treated like a suspect. That's really not what the SIU should be focusing on to the extent that they are. We've got to fix this; we've got to move on.

On the other side of that, I'm pro-OPP; I'm pro-police. Many people are anti-police. I think of the 12 years of the Caledonia and Six Nations debacle. The anniversary was just a week or so ago. Many people came out as being anti-OPP, anti-police.

We recognize the other side of the story: There has to be a clear route for filing public complaints, those kinds of complaints against public law enforcement, commencing as an independent investigation if necessary. We're creating the Law Enforcement Complaints Agency. This continues from the existing Office of the Independent Police Review Director. Part of that is improving training and improving governance.

As an earlier response to Justice Tulloch's report on street checks, it will mandate, obviously, a lot more education, information and training around human rights with respect to systemic racism, encouragement of diversity, Indigenous culture, and rights training for officers and special constables. It will also make successful completion of training mandatory as well for members of police service boards.

Our legislation will maintain First Nations policing provisions to provide First Nations and Indigenous people with the ability to opt into Ontario's policing legislation.

Community safety goes beyond policing itself and it obviously goes beyond this particular piece of legislation and a further mandate for municipalities to develop and adopt community safety and well-being plans. I feel there's got to be a bit more work done as well on emergency preparedness.

1530

We're also improving the Coroners Act through this particular bill to safeguard items seized as part of a coroner's death investigation, allowing coroners earlier

access to records so they can better determine if an investigation is necessary and reopening closed corners' cases to prevent further deaths in the future.

We are also proposing amendments to the Mandatory Blood Testing Act. I was talking to a friend of mine just a few nights ago. He's with the police association. I think there was an MPP named Dunlop who did a lot of work on this a few years ago. Again, the blood testing act is to better support and provide peace of mind for not only the officers but also victims of crime and other first responders, others who are at risk of coming in contact with perhaps dangerous bodily substances.

I will wrap up. As you look out the front entrance, if you were to angle—I use the analogy in the military of 12 o'clock. Take a look at 10 or 11 o'clock. There is Ontario's police memorial out in front of this building. It bears the names of 211 who are described as heroes in life, not death. These are officers who are known to have lost their lives in the line of duty. It's essentially a story that goes back to 1804, with everyday names like Margaret and George and William. Many were mothers, fathers, sisters, loved and missed by the families they left behind. In those unfortunate cases where someone loses their life in the line of duty—any work that we do on this legislation is designed to serve their memory well, in addition.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's an honour to rise this afternoon. Now, for people who may be just tuning in or are in fact suffering from the inability to gain sleep, I want to just let them know what it is that we're actually doing this afternoon, and that is that we are debating government notice of motion number 31. Again, this is all about moving Bill 68, our COPS bill, the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act, into committee as soon as we can, notwithstanding the fact that we also do require input from the people within the great province of Ontario.

For those who may be wondering: "That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 68"—this is important for people who are tuning in and listening to this debate.

"That the deadline for requests to appear be 5 p.m. on Tuesday, March 5, 2019; and

"That the Clerk of the Committee provide a list of all interested presenters to each member of the subcommittee and their designate following the deadline for requests to appear by 6 p.m. on Tuesday, March 5, 2019; and

"That, each member of the subcommittee or their designate provide the Clerk of the Committee with a prioritized list of presenters to be scheduled, chosen from the list of all interested presenters received by the Clerk, by 10 a.m. on Wednesday, March 6, 2019...."

Now, I'm going to come back to this in a few moments, but I want to again relay the fact that it's important that this time allocation bill or motion be brought forward and passed, whether it be today or a deferred vote tomorrow, because we want to get this into committee as soon as possible, because in the meantime, the ill-advised police

act—I think it was former Liberal Bill 175, if I'm not mistaken—is still in effect and we've got to get that thing changed right away.

So, Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to the government's proposed legislation, the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act, 2019, or, as I mentioned earlier, the COPS act. Now, again, it's a pleasure to speak to the necessary and positive changes that we're making, as community safety is the common thread between many different issues that I've advocated for in my career as MPP for the riding and the great people of Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

Speaker, when our PC Party were actually in official opposition status for—well, the last 15 years, but for myself, it's been the last four years as the critic for community safety and correctional services. We had many, many challenges, and we were ill-advised by the Liberal government with regard to Bill 175. Of course, we opposed that bill, because, in fact, it handcuffed our officers.

For example, they talk about carding and they talk about police checks. It's unfortunate that the official opposition, in their capacity, are continually saying that carding and police checks are the same thing. Interestingly enough, Madam Speaker, Friday night—I'd had a full day of meetings—I ran home, grabbed a bowl of soup, headed down to the Chatham-Kent police department and went on a ride-along starting at 6 p.m. I got home around 3 a.m. It was an incredible experience to see our officers—especially in the CIRT, the critical investigative response team—in action. Of course, to members on the other side, I was wearing a vest, because I was advised to wear a vest for liability reasons, but also for the fact of my safety, as well.

Again, I encourage members in the opposition, if they have an opportunity to go on a ride-along with members from their police services, whether it be at a municipal level or whether it be the OPP, depending upon who you want to ride with—I've ridden with both. I've gone on four ride-alongs, and I'll tell you, I enjoyed it immensely.

It gives me an opportunity to talk to our front-line officers, and to get their intake. Do you know what? I'm going to tell you something: They're all very familiar with Bill 68, and they are all extremely supportive of the measures that our government is doing to help them do their job. We are removing the handcuffs, so to speak, that the former Liberal government placed on our officers. We're helping them do the job, to serve and protect, so that they can in fact have that feeling of accomplishment at day's end.

Sometimes their days are, as they would say, perhaps a little bit humdrum, but then there are other days where, for example—like my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk talked about—they put their lives on the line. They put their lives on the line, and they never know in the morning when they kiss their spouse goodbye whether they're going to be coming home at night. We don't know that. They don't know that either. Again, I tip my hat to our fine officers who protect us in the province of Ontario.

It's quite clear that Conservative governments across the English-speaking world seek to bring the concept of

subsidiarity—that is, local decision-making and community connection—into the rule of law. As the rule of law is a prerequisite for a free society, having citizens and police officers know each other and trust each other is of paramount importance. We've even heard the opposition say that it's important that police officers have each other's backs, and I couldn't agree with that more.

As I mentioned earlier, I saw it first-hand on my ride-along experience with the Chatham-Kent Police Service. I saw all the night hours that our men and women in blue put in to keep our communities safe, and the familiarity and rapport of our chief, Chief Gary Conn. I've had meetings with Gary—Chief Conn; forgive me, Gary—with regard to issues and challenges that administration faces, as well as what his front-line officers face each and every day. Again, I commend them.

Madam Speaker, I'm sure that all the members of this House can in fact agree that our province needs a strong and effective police service with the trust and backing of the general public. In the last 10 years, we've seen a terrorist attack in Ottawa, an attempted terrorist attack in London, a mass shooting on the Danforth in Toronto, ongoing gang violence in certain municipalities, and the uncovering of vast networks devoted to sex trafficking, labour trafficking, drug smuggling and gun smuggling in every single community.

1540

As a matter of fact, Madam Speaker, I'm sure you're aware that just in January in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington I conducted a town hall, or you could call it a public seminar, with regard to human trafficking and how bad it is on that 401 corridor. We had in excess of 600 people attend that seminar. We had grandparents, we had parents and we had children at that seminar. It was so important to inform our young people of today, because social media is a good thing and it can be a bad thing as well.

Again, we talk about the trends I just mentioned. They're not all, however, I'm sure, really bad. I'm sure that every member of the House would agree that an impartial and effective police presence is necessary for those trapped in domestic abuse to escape and be safe while rebuilding their lives. Then again, Madam Speaker, there are those moments that I've been exposed to in my ride-alongs: the crimes of passion that erupt when a person in desperate circumstances succumbs to the temptation to lash out or engage in self-destructive behaviour.

As a matter of fact, Madam Speaker, I experienced that Friday night. It wasn't pretty but, thankfully, the officers that were dispatched to the home—and I was there; I was in the home with the individual, who was in fact contemplating a harm to himself or perhaps to others, because there were rifles in that home. Our officers, our men and women in blue, were able to calmly talk to the individual. We got him in the back of a cruiser and we got him to the hospital. We got him the necessary help that he needed. Again, hats off to Chatham-Kent Police Service, our men and women in blue, for their quick movement in order to save that individual from personal harm or perhaps harm to others as well.

These situations show most clearly just how it is desperately needed for our officers to use sometimes force and engage sometimes in crisis leadership to calm a person down and to remind them that there is hope at the end of the tunnel.

Madam Speaker, it's because of these needs that our government is legislating the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act. Through the introduction of this particular act, we are seeking to create a stronger police oversight structure, provide police officers with a fairer disciplinary process, and strengthen public confidence through more transparency and new training requirements.

I'm going to go on record saying this. Bill 175, the previous Liberal bill—was it a horrible bill? There were components of that bill that were good, and I'm being fair about this. But there are other aspects of that bill that we felt, and we feel, needed strengthening. I'm sure that maybe the opposition would agree with that as well, that it wasn't the best bill brought forth. We wanted to ensure that we strengthen that.

Again, some of the examples of the past Liberal legislation included: When saving a life with naloxone, police officers were automatically subjected to an investigation. Our government fixed that in the fall.

The heroes who responded to the Danforth shooting spent six months under a cloud of investigation. That is, ironically, considered fast compared to a lot of other SIU investigations. We're wanting to fix that. We want to speed up that process.

Officers who are not successful at preventing someone from committing suicide are automatically subject to an SIU investigation.

We led a thorough review of the previous act, Madam Speaker, and we identified problems that needed to be fixed. The Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act restores fairness and respect for police, enhances oversight, and improves governance, training and transparency.

Police are going to be the first to say that public trust is essential for them in order to do their job effectively. Effective oversight is key to creating trust. The old oversight system is broken, confusing and slow. It doesn't work for police or the public alike. That's why we are creating one window for public complaints, reducing duplication and better focusing the mandate of the special investigations unit.

Currently, complaints that are made by the public against a police officer are handled by the Office of the Independent Police Review Director. Under our legislation, if passed, members of the public will be able to bring all complaints forward to the new independent Law Enforcement Complaints Agency, the LECA.

Justice Tulloch recommended that the OIPRD be renamed to facilitate better understanding by the public of its functions. As suggested—

Interjections.

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

I'm just going to ask the members on this side of the House with all the little side conversations going on to

please lower your volume. I'm having a very difficult time hearing the member speak.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): I recognize the member for Timmins on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We had the member from Nipissing-Renfrew-whatever lobby us to be able to come in on this debate on time allocation, and I'm hoping the government will give him some time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Back to the member for Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

To the member from Timmins: Not a chance. Not a chance.

Now, where was I? Oh, yes. I was talking about current complaints made by the public against police officers. They are handled by the Office of the Independent Police Review Director, the OIPRD. Of course, under our legislation, if passed, members of the public will be able to bring all complaints forward to the new independent Law Enforcement Complaints Agency, the LECA. If we get any more of those agencies, boards and commissions, we'll be able to go from A to Z because we'll have covered every letter in the alphabet, I'm sure.

But I just want to suggest again, Madam Speaker, that Justice Tulloch recommended that the OIPRD be renamed to facilitate better understanding by the public of its functions. As suggested, the OIPRD would be renamed the Law Enforcement Complaints Agency. Again, I think that's important for us to know.

The current Police Services Act, 1990, will remain in force until the new legislation is proclaimed. That's why we are time-allocating this. That's why we want to get this into committee. But we want to hear from people, first of all. If you've got a better way of making our legislation better, we want to hear from you so we can get it into legislation—the sooner the better. Ask any police officer. That's all I've got to say about that—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Stop the clock, please. I recognize the member from Timmins on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order, I just want to thank the member for getting back to the time allocation motion after the last 20 minutes of speaking to the bill, which he condemned everybody else about.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): That's not a point of order.

Back to the member for Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: The member for Timmins will withdraw. All right, back to this—and I appreciate the fact that you're reminding me to bring it back to time allocation, as well.

The previous government's legislation didn't even pay lip service to the principle of fairness or due process for police officers. The Comprehensive Ontario Policing Services Act would address the concern that the SIU

investigations take too long to complete, and the act will better focus the mandate of the special investigations unit, the SIU. I talked about that a little bit earlier. We want to speed up that process—not only with the SIU, but we want to speed up the process through time allocation in order to get this bill through.

The inspector general is responsible for investigating board/advisory council member complaints, as well as service and policy complaints. Under the new legislation, the inspector general—the IG—would impose remedies for board/advisory council member misconduct and non-compliance with our legislation, rather than the minister.

Right now, we're also suggesting in this legislation that when an Ontarian dials 911, they can count on a police officer to, in fact, show up. That's a change from the Liberals' legislation. Policing functions, meeting the criteria below, must be delivered by members of a police service or persons acting under their direction if—get this—the policing function is either (1) law enforcement, (2) emergency response, or (3) maintaining the public peace; and the function requires the exercise of the powers of a peace officer or a police officer, in fact.

1550

We thank Justice Tulloch for his good work. We're taking the time to review and assess the recommendations, most of which can be implemented through regulatory changes. We will be responding to his recommendations accordingly.

This new legislation provides an early response to Justice Tulloch's report by making systemic racism, human rights and Indigenous cultural training mandatory for new officers. That's another reason why we are time-allocating Bill 68.

The Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act will allow chiefs of police to suspend an officer without pay as an interim measure under certain circumstances and subject to an appeal to an independent adjudication. This includes when an officer is charged with a serious offence, which will be defined in the regulations.

If an officer is under investigation, a chief of police would be able to request suspension without pay as an interim measure for misconduct that meets certain criteria. The chief of police can impose suspension without pay directly if the statutory criteria are satisfied. However, if the officer challenges a chief of police decision, the matter is then referred to adjudication.

Again, community safety goes beyond policing itself and so does our proposed legislation. We will continue to mandate municipalities to develop and adopt community safety and well-being plans.

We are improving the Coroners Act to safeguard items seized as part of a coroner's death investigation, allowing the coroners' earlier access to records so that they can better determine if, in fact, an investigation is necessary, and reopening closed coroners' cases to prevent further deaths in the future.

We're also proposing amendments to the Mandatory Blood Testing Act—that had been pointed out by my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk—to better support and provide peace of mind to victims of crime, first

responders and others at risk of coming in contact with foreign bodily substances of others—yet again another reason why we are time-allocating this bill: to get it into committee and get it into third reading and get it passed so that, again, our police officers can enjoy the benefits of this new legislation.

When we talk about police with fairness and respect again, I want to reiterate, Madam Speaker, that police deserve our gratitude and respect, not our suspicion and scorn. That's why our government for the people is, in fact, providing police the tools, the resources and the support they need to do their jobs. The previous government's legislation didn't even pay lip service—I mentioned that before—to the principle of fairness or due process for police officers. Not only was this unfair; it was disrespectful to the police officers who risk their lives to keep us safe.

Our legislation is based on fairness and respect for the profession of policing. That's why we're giving the public confidence, as I mentioned earlier, that when they phone 911, a trained, accountable police officer will show up—something not guaranteed under the previous government's legislation.

Madam Speaker, I could go on and on and on. It sounds like I have been going on and on and on, and there's probably some truth to that. But do you know what? I want to read what my friend Rob Jamieson, who is president and CEO of the Ontario Provincial Police Association, has said about our Bill 68: “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 today intend to empower police across Ontario to ensure community safety. We look forward to reviewing details of the bill and participating in the legislative process”—again, Rob Jamieson, president and CEO of the Ontario Provincial Police Association.

Then I also want to read a quote—I have time for one more—from, in fact, another good friend of mine, Bruce Chapman, who is president of the Police Association of Ontario. Here's what Bruce Chapman has to say:

“Over the past three years, the Police Association of Ontario ... has been focused on advocating for the thoughtful modernization of the Police Services Act with both the former and current provincial governments. The PAO has maintained that Ontario's front-line sworn and civilian police personnel require the appropriate tools and adequate funding to keep our communities safe, and we have remained clear that we support effective oversight, accountability, and transparency to build the public's trust in our profession. Ontario's front-line police personnel welcome today's announcement by the Ontario government.”

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Ms. Thompson has moved government notice of motion number 31 relating to allocation of time on Bill 68, An Act with respect to community safety and policing. 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.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Pursuant to standing order 28(h), the vote on government notice of motion 31 will be deferred until deferred votes on Tuesday, March 5, 2019.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): Orders of the day?

Hon. Bill Walker: No further business, Madam Speaker—adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): The minister has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in support will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On division.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Lisa Gretzky): On division.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1557.

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