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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 6 March 2019

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 6 mars 2019

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Let us begin this morning with a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

RESTORING ONTARIO'S
COMPETITIVENESS ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 VISANT À RÉTABLIR
LA COMPÉTITIVITÉ DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 27, 2019, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 66, An Act to restore Ontario's competitiveness by amending or repealing certain Acts / *Projet de loi 66, Loi visant à rétablir la compétitivité de l'Ontario en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House passed March 5, 2019, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Smith, Bay of Quinte, has moved second reading of Bill 66, An Act to restore Ontario's competitiveness by amending or repealing certain Acts.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a number of noes.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Second reading vote deferred.

THE PEOPLE'S HEALTH CARE
ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LES SOINS DE SANTÉ
POUR LA POPULATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 5, 2019, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 74, An Act concerning the provision of health care, continuing Ontario Health and making consequential and related amendments and repeals / *Projet de loi 74, Loi concernant la prestation de soins de santé, la prorogation de Santé Ontario, l'ajout de modifications corrélatives et connexes et des abrogations.*

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

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: Good morning, everyone. I'd like to start off by saying how grateful I am as a Canadian, and indeed as an Ontarian, for our public health care system. All of us in Ontario can each be grateful to live in a province where the health care providers are best in class and health care is publicly available. We are truly fortunate—and I can't stress this enough—to have some of the best medical professionals in the world working in our province and caring for patients and their families all across Ontario.

So to the doctors and nurses living, working and caring for those in my riding of Cambridge, I want to say thank you. To all the people who work every day to help and care for patients in the clinics and in hospitals across Ontario, thank you for the work that you do and for being there.

But as the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has already said, while universal access to publicly funded health care is not up for debate, the structure and effectiveness of our system is. Mr. Speaker, just because we have some of the best and brightest working in health care in Ontario, that doesn't mean that our system is perfect. It's not. We can do better, and we need to do better.

Patients are languishing in hospital hallways. That is unacceptable. Ontarians are often waiting too long for procedures. Caregivers are increasingly frustrated as they're forced to navigate and struggle through complicated processes, trying to access the services they need for their families and loved ones. This isn't the fault of our doctors and nurses or the front-line health care workers, but these are issues that health care workers see every single day. These are the issues patients and their families live with on a daily basis.

Things need to change. As I've said already, Ontario is home to thousands of committed health care providers who ensure patients get the highest standard of care, but the system is currently organized in a way that works better for bureaucracy than for patients and the providers dedicated to helping them. Too many across Ontario, unfortunately, know all too well what it's like being bumped around from place to place. More often than not, different health care providers don't talk to each other, so people have to fill out the same forms, tell the same story, and may even need to get the same tests done more than once, all because of a system that doesn't communicate as well as it could. They use faxes instead of email. If there is a digital medical record, most likely those who need it don't have access to it.

Mr. Speaker, this is 2019. Ontarians deserve to have a system that is keeping up with the times. These are just a few examples of bureaucracy that exist in each different

part of the system that Ontarians face under the current system as it is today. The current system is not patient-focused or centred, but it should be. Bill 74, our government's new health care plan, recognizes this problem and introduces positive solutions to start fixing the health care system.

Our government is committed to building a connected health care system to improve the patient and caregiver experience and strengthen local services. These changes will make it easier for Ontarians to navigate the system, rather than be lost within it. Providers will work together to take the guesswork out of transitions, where we know patients often feel lost and unsupported. As we improve our public health care system, patient needs will be put front and centre, as they should be. The new system will be designed to ensure patients receive the best care, no matter when and where they need it.

Bill 74 means changing certain aspects of the system to improve the health care experience and services, so that Ontarians would have one integrated team of health care providers working together to meet their needs, a medical record that both they and their providers can access easily, and help in navigating the public health care system on any day and at any time.

Anyone who has spent time dealing with, or existing within the system as it is today, can clearly see ways the health care experience can be made better for patients and better for the system as well. For example, sharing electronic health records between specialists means only having to test blood for the same issue once. Getting one X-ray that a family doctor and an ER nurse can both access electronically is quicker and simply makes more sense.

But, Mr. Speaker, I need to point out what isn't changing, because I know Ontarians are curious, and I also know the opposition likes to talk about what we're doing, as they should. But I'd like to set them straight on a few things. While we improve the system, Ontarians will continue to have access to the care they need and to the providers that they trust. The health care services they receive will remain uninterrupted.

Under the proposed new system, they can still go to the same doctor, choose their own provider: doctor, nurse practitioner or specialist. They'll receive care by the same trusted providers as before, and they can be confident that what is paid for by OHIP today will be paid for by OHIP in the future. Ontarians can expect excellent service from all health care sectors, from cancer care and organ donation to home and community care.

Under our plan, Ontario health teams are being introduced to provide a new way of organizing and delivering services in local communities. Under Ontario health teams, the health care providers Ontarians see—including hospitals, doctors and home care providers—will work as one coordinated team, no matter where they provide care. And a great part about Ontario health teams is that they will rely on leadership that already exists in the community, rather than create another level of bureaucracy and management. Over time, Ontarians will belong to Ontario health teams that coordinate and deliver services to meet

individual health care needs. These services will include primary care, hospital care, rehabilitative care, home and community care, plus residential long-term care, in addition to mental health and addictions supports. Under our plan, with Ontario health teams, if you're a patient and if you need to see different providers or receive care in different settings, your team will work together to make sure you get the care that you need.

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Ontario health teams will know someone's health history, be aware of health care services locally, and help people navigate the system 24 hours a day and seven days a week. Ontario health teams will ensure referrals get to the right place. They'll receive and share health records with patients and caregivers, such as test results, and provide them with digital options, such as online access to health records and virtual care. It's 2019; faxes just don't cut it anymore. People need better access to their records, and our providers need the means to give it.

Interjection: Hear, hear.

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: Hear, hear.

Under our plan, with Ontario health teams, providers will be able to safely and seamlessly access patient health care records and share them with other members on the team. It's thanks to this that patients will never feel like they've been discharged from one provider to the next, or that old feeling of getting bumped around from place to place.

To achieve better-connected care, including Ontario health teams, we are coordinating provincial health agencies and specialized provincial programs so they are more effective and will work together. If the proposed legislation is passed, this single agency will be known as Ontario Health.

Our changes mean one central organization to oversee the health care system. This means better experiences for patients and caregivers, better health outcomes for patients, and better clinical guidance and support for health care providers. This means a sustainable health care system for years to come, and this is something that Ontarians using the health care system, and the medical professionals working within the system, need. This is an opportunity to stop working in silos and, instead, expand things that work well in our health care system.

Our health care dollars should be spent where it has an impact: on patients. Patients should not be confused about the care they need or how to access that care. Under our new plan, if passed, we would see some existing provincial agencies move under the new agency, Ontario Health. Cancer Care Ontario, eHealth Ontario, the Trillium Gift of Life Network and others would all be transitioned over.

But there is something specific that I want to point to: the 14 local health integration networks, or LHINs, in this province. The LHINs will also be brought under the umbrella of Ontario Health because, again—and I can't stress this enough—our focus is patient-centred care. Our focus is making sure that the health care system works for the people who need it.

The LHINs have proven in many ways to add more to the bureaucracy and give less to patients, who have no

choice but to use them. We, our party, fought hard in opposition, advocating for change and pushing the previous Liberal government year after year for the changes to the system, changes to the LHINs and changes that put patients first—changes that we are now proposing as government.

The NDP used to agree with us on this. The NDP, who are now the official opposition, used to think that the LHINs didn't work, that they didn't work well enough for patients or for caregivers. I'm expecting some debate, so I am curious as to what changed for the NDP. Now that they're sitting across from us rather than beside us in this place, I do find it quite interesting.

I find it interesting that the criticisms to our plan, the changes we're making to better serve patients—that, not so long ago, they were pointing out where the Liberals went wrong and how the LHINs weren't working. I quote, "Unelected LHINs hold great power and responsibility in our health care system. The government made the LHINs responsible for planning, coordinating, funding health services in hospitals, community care centres, community support service organizations, mental health and addiction agencies, community health centres and long-term-care homes. Quite frankly, the Liberal government has shifted responsibility for most of our local health care to the LHINs and, unfortunately, the blame as well."

Mr. Speaker, that's a direct quote from the member for Niagara Falls in January 2014, before his election to this House, when he spoke to the Standing Committee on Social Policy. I believe he was representing Unifor at that time, but as I've noted already, the NDP agreed that the LHINs weren't working. They pushed for a review, along with us. Well, it's more than four years later, and the LHINs still don't work for Ontarians.

Interjection.

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: You'll get your chance; don't you worry.

In October 2016, the member for Toronto–Danforth said this of the then Liberal government changing community care access centres, CCACs, into the local health integration networks—and this is the NDP member, directly from Hansard, in the Legislature on Thursday, October 20, 2016:

"I have to say that in many ways, the heart of this bill is the elimination of the community care access centres, the CCACs, and the transfer of power, authority and organizational responsibility to the local health integration networks, the LHINs. But that is not going to deal with our problem in long-term care. It's not going to deal with our problem in the home care area. I talk to constituents of mine—Speaker, you would be familiar with them—in the seniors' buildings in my riding who consistently face problems accessing support from personal support workers to come into their units and help them to do the small number of things that would allow them to continue living independently. The reality is that a reorganization, a change of initials from a C-C-A-C to an L-H-I-N, is not going to actually deal with the home care crisis that we face."

Again, Mr. Speaker, I have to ask: What has changed for the NDP? Why are they now standing up for a system that they've said for years needed to be fixed under the Liberals? Our government is trying to fix what the Liberals didn't. We're trying to fix a health care system that the NDP once agreed with us needed fixing.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP might have changed their tune over the years, but we haven't. We're focused on listening to patients and health care providers and ensuring that Ontarians have what they need from their health care system.

I know that there are providers in my riding of Cambridge who want to see the changes our government is proposing in Bill 74. Patrick Gaskin, president and CEO of Cambridge Memorial Hospital, had this to say about our plan:

"As a community hospital mandated to provide comprehensive acute care services, we understand the benefit of partnership as a means to both extend our resources and enhance our patients' journeys.

"Here are some of our examples:

"—Cambridge Memorial Hospital worked with local primary care physicians to expand mental health supports, thereby helping to reduce an outpatient mental health wait-list from over 500 to just 30 in a span of a year.

"—We combined efforts with regional police, community-based programs and local health agencies at Connectivity Table to wrap services around the most vulnerable members in our community, helping to reduce their visits to our emergency department.

"—We were one of the first hospitals in the province—in Cambridge—"to embrace the collaborative quality improvement plans (C-QIP) that are developed in co-operation with primary care and local health agencies.

"—In collaboration with Stonehenge—a community-based organization focused on addictions treatment—we introduced on February 25 what is one of Ontario's first peer recovery coaches in our emergency department to bring life-changing counselling to those wanting to treat their drug dependencies.

"—By the end of March, patients at Cambridge Memorial Hospital will have access to their hospital records online through a partnership with MyChart, thereby involving them in their care and enhancing their overall patient experience.

"These are the things that add value to our health care system, yet they take tremendous will and effort from all parties because our current system is not built for integration.

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"Cambridge Memorial Hospital is aligned with the government's intent to lift barriers and create a system that is seamless, as it is patient-centred. We believe Cambridge and North Dumfries would benefit from government's proposed Ontario health teams. Our hospital is well positioned philosophically and we have the experience. As such, we welcome this opportunity and are now preparing our business case so to be an early adopter of this model." It's a very long quote, Mr. Speaker.

Patients, caregivers, doctors and health professionals across this province are calling on us. They're telling us that change is needed, and what we propose with Bill 74 answers that call. It gets rid of needless barriers and costly bureaucracy and it puts the patient first, which is right where they belong.

In the final two minutes, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to share something personal. In my past employment, I used to work very closely with medical professionals. Back in 2007, when the LHINs were first introduced, again, I was working very closely with specialists and general practitioners. They said to me that they were concerned and they didn't think this was going to work. There was a lot of rumbling in the medical community that I was speaking with. They didn't like the idea of the LHINs. Lo and behold, 12-plus years later, people are still not happy with the LHINs, and we're looking to, as I mentioned in my speech, integrate them into Ontario Health.

In my work at the Kidney Foundation, which is a great charity, I worked very closely with the Ontario Renal Network. Again, any of this integration is going to help. It's going to help specialists; it's going to help patients. Patients who used to come to the foundation for support would speak often about how challenging it was not only to be dealing with a disease like kidney disease, which is very complex on its own, but then to navigate the health care system, which would add extra stress to them and their families.

Mr. Speaker, this bill speaks very closely to me. I'm happy to see these proposed changes. I look forward to continued debate and look forward to, hopefully, this bill passing.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: It's a pleasure to respond to some of the comments that were made.

Recently, I read a book about John Robarts, who was the Progressive Conservative Premier of Ontario from 1961 to 1971. I actually was impressed with a lot of the things that he did. He built GO Transit. He expanded our university system. He built our college system. He kept tuition fees low because he was a Progressive Conservative.

The thing that I disagreed with, or that I would have disagreed with: In 1965, he fought against public health care. He didn't want public health care coming into Ontario. That is always the concern of the NDP, because we recognize the importance of public health care and keeping it public. The thing that concerns me in the member of the government's comments and even in the name of the bill is that it doesn't say "public" health care. That adjective, "public," is so important because it is the public nature of our health care system that means that we get health care at a fraction of the cost—we pay far less for health care than they do in the United States—and yet we are a much healthier population.

The health care system that John Robarts fought against in 1965 and that we are afraid this government is going to try to dismantle is also a competitive advantage for Canada

and for Ontario. When companies are deciding if they're going to locate in the United States or in Canada, they often will locate in Canada because the health insurance premiums that they pay up here are so much less.

I support some of the things that the person was saying. One place where we do agree is that the current system is not working. There are too many people languishing with hallway medicine. There are too many people, too many of our seniors who should be in long-term care, who are languishing in hospitals. In that, we are in agreement. But our big concern is that this government does not use the term "public" when they talk about our health care system.

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

Mr. David Piccini: I just wanted to thank the member from Cambridge for her excellent speech this morning and for highlighting the significant stakeholder support for this bill and for much-needed reform. Thank you to the member for Spadina as well. I appreciate your input on this.

I heard the member opposite get hung up on words being used. Yes, it's important, and I think Minister Elliott has said a number of times in this House that Ontarians will continue to rely on the public health care system that they've known to love and that has become strained. In fact, it has become broken. Over the last 15 years, we've seen the increasing bureaucratization of our health care system.

I come from a background, having worked in health care—and we just weren't listening to our health care professionals. The reason that doctors mobilized so firmly was because of the devastating cuts and because of the cutbacks for residency positions by the previous government.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Look in the mirror.

Mr. David Piccini: I understand it upsets the member opposite, and it would upset me, too, after what they did to our health care system. It upsets a lot of people in Ontario. The system was broken.

This minister, this government is committed to ending hallway health care. One thousand patients in the hallway is 1,000 patients too many. It's 146 days to wait to get in a long-term-care bed. We've taken immediate action: 6,000 beds. We've delivered four acute-care beds at my hospital; a \$1.7-million investment into Campbellford Memorial. That's going to continue under this government.

Ontarians will continue to depend on our health care system. They will continue to receive the supports they need. But, Mr. Speaker, we can do more. We must do more.

This is a plan that's going to get Ontario's health care system working for the people who need it most: the patients.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm always happy to stand up and debate on bills—especially the health care bill. It's an extremely important bill. This is probably one of the

largest restructurings of Ontario's health care system that has been brought forward in decades, centuries.

This government says that they've been consulting people, but I read an article just the other day in the Star in which doctors and nurses were saying that they weren't consulted. This government is also in such a hurry when it comes to consultation during committee process. They don't travel bills. They don't actually give enough time for days for presentations. So when they stand and they talk about how much they've consulted, I have to ask the question—I really don't trust that piece of it.

One other thing that they're going to do is they're going to create these super-agencies. We don't even know who those super-agencies will be, because they're still under the application process. What happens is, in this super-agency, you only have to have three core basket services of health care. Right now, there are usually six core health care services that we believe are required in order to provide full health care to everyone for access, and those would be hospital services, primary care services, mental health and addiction services, home care and community services, long-term-care-home services, and palliative care services. If you restrict super-agencies to only have three out of those six, how are people going to have access to those other health care services that they need so much, that are so important to them? That is a concern, Speaker.

And the fact that they are saying, "We're still waiting on applications. We don't know what the super-agencies are going to look like, what they're going to be composed of" is a concern under this bill.

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It's really important to rise and to speak to Bill 74, because health care is something that touches all of the 14 million-plus people who live in this province and who rely on our health care system.

What the government has said in terms of bureaucracy—this is the biggest form of bureaucracy, creating this super-agency with layers and layers and layers between patient care and the ministry itself. So I think that there's a lot to this bill, and a lot of sweeping changes.

I want to remind the members opposite that measuring of wait times across our system is something that was put in by the former Liberal government because the state in which we found our health care system was completely in chaos. We have spent the last number of years making investments in new hospitals, hiring nurses—all of those things—and all of that is at risk with the intention behind Bill 74.

I don't see the consultation plan here. All I see is a government that is making sweeping changes that will affect the lives of every Ontarian, without talking to anyone, without talking to the front-line health care professionals. They've come in, they've talked to me, to members of the Liberal caucus, and they are concerned. Everyone is concerned, because the government has not taken the time to put forward a consultation that really does get the best ideas and helps to improve our health care services.

0930

Obviously, to improve the health care system is something that should always be happening on a continuous basis, but you can't do it by just downloading big ideas without talking to the people who it will effect.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now back to the member from Cambridge for final comments.

Mrs. Belinda Karahalios: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member from Spadina–Fort York, the member from Scarborough–Guildwood, the member from Northumberland–Peterborough South and the member from London–Fanshawe for all of your comments on this. I'll just try to take everyone's comments together.

Addressing the member from Spadina–Fort York: We agree that the current system is not working. I'm really glad to hear that, because the current system is not working. The system that we were handed by the Liberals was broken.

He's saying that we didn't use the word "public." I'm looking at my paper, and I used the word "public" easily 20-odd number of times. There is nothing changing about our publicly funded health care system. I cannot say that enough; I don't think the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care or her parliamentary assistants can say that enough. Nothing is changing when it comes to our publicly funded health care system.

The member from Scarborough–Guildwood is talking about complete chaos, that there will be more chaos, and talking about consultations. I don't know if the Liberals can really talk about consultations, because a lot of that didn't happen under the Liberal government, unfortunately.

Again, when the LHINs were implemented, I was working in health care. I heard from front-line providers every single day, and as I continued to work in health care, I heard from the providers as well as patients how broken the system was. So I was hearing it; every day for 12 years I was hearing it. Now I'm here at Queen's Park and I'm telling you, Mr. Speaker, what I heard from patients and providers. The system was broken. They wanted change. They need change.

We promised change in the election. We are bringing change to the table.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? The member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Good morning, Speaker. How are you?

I suppose the best place to start this morning is on some of the areas on which we can agree with the government. We, the New Democrats, agree that our health care system is in crisis. Every member of this House has a horror story to tell. We've heard them in the House over and over again. I've told my story about my father. I've told the story about—in Hamilton, we had a grandmother who died waiting for an ambulance. That was simply because there was a code zero, and code zeros are a direct result of our overcrowded and underfunded health care system. So we agree completely that this is a crisis.

I think we also can agree that the Liberals did leave our world-class health care system hanging by a thread. The

system has been chronically underfunded, and that's not mentioned often enough. In fact, Ontario spends less per capita on health care funding than any other province in Canada, and that's important for us to acknowledge.

We can agree also that this system is currently being held together by the dedication of front-line workers—

Interjection: Hear, hear.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Exactly. See? We agree on that.

Our nurses, our technicians, our PSWs and our doctors: They are all working right now in untenable conditions, and their dedication is what's keeping the system going. So we do have the best health care workers in the world.

Unfortunately, this is where I would say that our agreement ends. The lovefest ends now.

Bill 74 is a plan that was cooked up behind closed doors without meaningful consultation. This government proposes to create a super-bureaucracy, Ontario Health. This is a super-bureaucracy with extraordinary powers. The bill will close award-winning agencies like our Cancer Care Ontario and the Trillium Gift of Life Network—

Interjection.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: —but, most chilling of all, Bill 74 opens the door to unprecedented levels of privatization in our health care system.

So yes, to the member for Northumberland–Peterborough South, we are hung up on the idea of public health care. That's what we are hung up on.

And I would say that just by saying the word “public” over and over and over again doesn't make it so. It needs to be in the bill, and it's not in this bill.

Most of all, we agree that we have a health care system that's in crisis. How is this minister proposing to fix our health care crisis? It's not by protecting our front-line health care workers. In fact, we hear that nurses are being laid off right now in this province of Ontario, when we need more nurses, not fewer.

They're not addressing the chronic underfunding, that we've talked about, in our health care system. Instead, it proposes to create a super-agency: Ontario Health. My guess is that must be a pretty super agency; in fact, it probably has got to be magic if one big bureaucracy can solve the crisis that we have here in the health care system. But it's really hard to tell exactly what this bureaucracy will do, because there is very, very little information in the bill.

It has been mentioned that there has been very little public consultation. When I was on the finance committee, the pre-budget consultation, we heard time and time again from people who were mentioning that they had not been consulted on the budget bill. We're hearing again that people—front-line health care workers—have not been consulted in any meaningful way on Bill 74.

That makes sense, because there's very little information in this bill to help us understand how this, in fact, will help address our health care system. We don't know how much money this super-agency is intended to save. We don't know how many jobs will be lost. The minister doesn't seem to have clear answers on that. We don't know who, in fact, will run this super-agency. Who is

going to be hired to lead this super-agency? I had visions, again, of some more gravy-train jobs in our future. I can only say that because there's no information on which to go on. There's absolutely no evidence presented in the bill or in this House that this idea of a super-agency will, in fact, work—

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Or that anybody even wants it.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: —or that anybody even wants it, I will add.

The examples that this government has proposed as apparently evidence that a super-agency will help—the plan that this is modelled on—in fact, do the exact opposite. They actually don't reassure us; they show us examples of things that just don't work. The government has suggested in debate yesterday that this is an idea based on systems in the UK and in the United States. But each of these examples are anything but success stories. In fact, they're quite the opposite, really.

Let's start with the American system of health care. I have family who live in the States. Our access to health care is something that they really, really regret losing when they moved to the US. In fact, we know that our Canadian-style health care is the envy of most Americans. The stories of the failure of the American health care system are legendary. We know this. We know that people in the US pay more for health care and have poorer health care outcomes. In fact, there are instances, based on this two-tier system that the American health care system has, that people aren't accessing health care.

My sister, in fact, is a nurse in the States. She worked here in Canada as a nurse, and she now works in the States as a cardiac specialist. She gives clear examples of how the system in Canada is so much better for patients and for people's outcomes. She tells a story of a family she knows who had a young girl who broke her arm, who didn't even go to the hospital because they didn't have coverage. That is the kind of horror story that we don't need to be setting up as a shining example of how to model our health care system. And then there's Britain. I would like to echo—before Britain—that nobody wants an American-style system here in Ontario. In fact, that's a nightmare scenario for most people in Ontario.

And now the UK: The National Health Service in the UK is facing a huge backlash. We've heard time and time again about how this is failing people. Harry Leslie Smith, who was a champion of the public health care system, recently died but was really a beacon of hope for us to understand how important a health care system is for the general health of people. He grew up in a time when people did not have access to a public health care system, and he feared that the changes that the national health system was implementing would take them backwards.

The system even has critics like Stephen Hawking, when he was alive, which led to legal hearings. In fact, the British Medical Association issued a warning that this type of model increases the risk of privatization, the very thing that we are saying that Ontarians and the New Democrats are concerned about. We are fearful that this is a plan that is going to usher in more privatization.

0940

Universally, critics pan the idea of a huge bureaucracy. Just name a huge bureaucracy or a super-agency. They are not things that come to mind as something that really is effective. Some of the major criticism for our huge bureaucracy is that it removes it from local communities, so now local communities don't have direct access. They feel that they will perhaps have unequal access to health care.

The most important thing is that they don't respect local decision-making and local knowledge. I feel that this is a government that thinks they have all the answers, and that they think they can concentrate all the power in the Premier's office or they can concentrate all of the decisions regarding our health care system in one super-agency. Really, does that sound right to anyone? Does that make any sense, that a super-agency is going to resolve this problem that we're facing today?

There are a few things that Canadians can certainly agree on. There are things that we share, our shared values, things that we take pride in. So I think it's appropriate, and I'm happy to be able to remind the House, that Tommy Douglas was voted the greatest Canadian ever.

Interjections.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Exactly. We thought it was going to be Don Cherry, but it turns out, in fact, it's Tommy Douglas.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I wonder why.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Why, you may ask, my friend? Well, why don't I tell you? Because Tommy Douglas was known as the father of medicare. He was the founder of the medicare system in Canada in which we take so much pride.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you, Tommy.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you, Tommy. Exactly.

The second thing that's connected to this, that we share in common, is that survey after survey shows that the thing that Canadians take most pride in, the thing that they value most, is our universal public health care. It's one of our greatest sources of pride. It's a shared national value, such that this commitment to our public health care is enshrined in the Canada Health Act. Let me just read the piece that is one of the founding principles of our Canada Health Act. It says, "All administration of provincial health insurance must be carried out by a public authority on a non-profit basis."

But this bill says no such thing. This bill proposes that our health care will be delivered by Ontario health teams. I suppose that's the new myCARE groups that we heard about earlier, but now they're called Ontario health care teams. This bill has absolutely no provisions that these teams will have to be not-for-profit public teams. There are no provisions at all that speak to the public, time and time again. There are no provisions that they have to be not-for-profit. There are no provisions that they have to be based in Ontario or even in Canada. This is chilling. This is very telling of what this government's true intentions are.

That means any corporation, whether they are a US-based mega-corporation, is welcomed into our health care system. In fact, it seems that this government is putting out

a welcome mat to these huge corporations, because apparently agencies are lined up to get in on this action—agencies that represent people who can afford \$1,250 a seat for a dinner to have access to the Premier.

Let us make no mistake: This is big business indeed. Senior care is big business. It's true that a lion's share of our home care and long-term care is already privatized, thanks to Mike Harris, and there is clear evidence that this is not serving us well. We all know, again, horror stories of people languishing in long-term-care homes, where there are not enough beds, and people who are not getting access to adequate home care. We hear the stories, you share the stories, we tell the stories—so the very fact that privatization is not working.

We have a \$60-billion health care system, and my guess is that looks pretty lucrative to some of these corporations that are looking to make profits on the backs of patients. We know that this \$60 billion comes from our hard-earned taxpayer dollars, and that every dollar that is siphoned off for profit is a dollar that doesn't go towards fixing our health care system; it's a dollar that doesn't go towards paying overworked nurses, underpaid PSWs. These are dollars that we need in the system, not to be siphoned out.

In fact, there is evidence that shows that when privatization profit motive is put into the health care system, it costs upwards—between 12 cents and 15 cents on every dollar goes to privatization. That's a lot of money being siphoned out of our health care system.

Patients and people in Ontario are not profit centres. Ontarians do not want big box health care here in Ontario.

Interjection.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: And if this is not the case, as the Minister of Finance seems to be indicating—he's quite good at multi-tasking over there.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: He's a genius. Just ask him.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes.

If this is not the case, Minister, then why not mandate it in the bill? Why is the bill silent on this issue if these fears are unfounded?

As they say, those who don't know history are doomed to repeat it. We have heard time and time again—and we know the history in Ontario of what Mike Harris did to our health care system.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Mike Harris is the board chair of Chartwell.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Oh, is that right?

Apparently, former Premier Mike Harris is the board chair of Chartwell, a very lucrative, private, for-profit provider of long-term care.

Laying off nurses, closing hospitals—in many ways we're still recovering from this regressive attack on our health care system. This privatization that we experienced under Mike Harris clearly has negatively impacted what we see now in our home care system. That competitive bidding scheme that he put out was a complete failure.

In Hamilton, we saw incredible chaos in the system, and venerable organizations like the VON, which had been operating for over 100 years in Hamilton—a community-based, not-for-profit organization—had to shut their doors.

That's the kind of effect, the kind of destabilization and chaos that this created in our history.

We've also seen boondoggles just like this super-agency. Mike Harris forced amalgamation—that was a big, bold idea from Mike Harris that forced amalgamation on cities around Ontario. A study by the Fraser Institute determined that amalgamation actually increased costs like property tax and long-term debt. The report states that “there was no tangible, financial benefit from amalgamation.”

So what do these things have in common besides being epic failures for the people of Ontario? I would say, number one, lack of consultation—but this is what has been expected from this government. We see time and time again that this government does not want to have debate on important issues. They like to have their time allocation bills so that we, as a Legislature, can't weigh in on these bills—these bills that are proposing to make transformative, sweeping changes to our health care system, but apparently we don't need to debate that in the House, because this is a government that has all the answers, and apparently we don't need to consult with the people of Ontario.

We believe that this bill should travel. If this is a bill that is going to create sweeping changes in the way people access health care—health care, the things that are most fundamentally critical to the lives and well-being of people—why do we not travel this bill? If this government is so proud of it, let's put it out there. Let the people of Ontario weigh in on this bill. This is their health care system, not the government's alone.

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It's kind of ironic that this government doesn't want to give every Ontarian a chance to weigh in on this bill. The irony is not lost with me that it's called The People's Health Care Act. You can't have a People's Health Care Act if you don't consult the people. It's just blatantly obvious. Really, if this is something that the minister is so proud of and this is something that has been developed behind closed doors, it is time that the people of Ontario get to see those doors opened, that they get to see what is about to be foisted on them in the province of Ontario.

Finally, I've got to say that the Minister of Health's spin game is in overdrive these days. She keeps saying “public, public, public” over and over again. As I said before, saying it doesn't make it so.

The other thing that she likes to say is that Ontarians will continue to pay for services with their OHIP card. This is a bit of false advertising, because the OHIP card is not a credit card. Our OHIP card is our right to access free public health care. This is health care that we pay for with our hard-earned tax dollars.

Do you know what? This bill does nothing—and the comments of the members across do nothing—to assure us that behind the scenes, in the closed doors of the Premier's office, this isn't a plan that is looking to siphon off dollars for private gain. If this is not the case, if this is something that you are proud of and you are assuring us that the delivery of our health care will be public, not-for-profit—

not mega-corporations, not for-profit corporations, not corporations that are traded on the stock exchange—that these are public entities that will be tending to and caring for the people of Ontario, put it in the bill.

So I say to the minister: Mandate it in the bill. Stand up, be clear and say it directly, because—do you know what?—14 million people in Ontario are looking to be reassured that you are not putting our public health care system up for sale.

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

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I'm very pleased to rise and speak today about this wonderful bill to strengthen our public health care system.

When we look at this bill, I think we're talking about fixing some of the significant challenges that we have had in our health care system. When we talk about hallway health care, this is not just a slogan; this is a reality. I have no doubt that many of my colleagues from both sides of the aisle have had a chance to visit their local hospitals and see this themselves, if not experienced it themselves, as a patient, and so we had to take action to address this.

The health care piece is one piece of, I believe, an interconnected triangle. That is the health care piece, the long-term-care piece and the home care piece. All three sides of that triangle need to be working in harmony for us to truly achieve the kind of public health care system that we all want.

I look at my own experience: I am fortunate to have a doctor who's part of the Rideau Family Health Team. If I have a health issue, I can go to my doctor, and I immediately get access to a team of allied health care professionals. Whether it be a dietitian, a doctor, a nurse practitioner—whatever it might be—there's a team that I have access to.

Let's scale that model. Let's expand that. Let's give hospitals the opportunity to partner with a long-term-care facility, to partner with different groups in the community that can help ensure that when a patient accesses our public health care system, they get the full support they need.

I am pleased to support this bill, and I look forward to seeing the development of it.

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

M. Guy Bourgouin: Merci, monsieur le Président. Comme vous le savez, ce mois-ci, c'est le Mois de la Francophonie. Ça me fait plaisir de parler du projet de loi 74, puis les effets que ça va avoir sur les francophones, les soins de santé francophones dans la province.

Nous croyons que les services de santé en français sont gravement en danger. M^{me} la ministre a fait des promesses aux francophones, mais on ne voit pas ces promesses dans le projet de loi. Le projet de loi n'inclut pas de détails sur les entités de planification en santé, comme le Réseau du mieux-être francophone du Nord de l'Ontario. Il faudra s'assurer que les entités de planification continuent de faire l'évaluation, la planification et l'analyse des services de santé français aux niveaux provincial et local. Ce qui n'est cependant pas clair c'est le fait que les entités de

planification sont désignées dans une zone géographique qui chevauche les RLISS. Comment vont-elles fonctionner dans le cadre de la nouvelle agence? Pour les gens du Nord, les francophones, on risque d'avoir encore plus de services de télémédecine.

Il y a un vieux dicton en français qui dit : « chat échaudé craint l'eau ». On a vu ce gouvernement-là attaquer notre commissaire de la langue française. On a vu l'élimination de notre université francophone. Si la ministre dit que les services ne changeront pas, qu'elle les mette dans la loi. J'ai négocié pendant 21 ans. Ils disent que le diable est dans les détails. Mettez-les dans le projet de loi. Mettez ces détails-là, qui sont importants pour qu'on continue d'avoir des entités de planification de santé et pour qu'on puisse avoir les services francophones qu'on mérite, dans la langue française, et pour qu'on puisse être représentés.

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

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Our health system is broken, and we are having serious issues. Being in hospital, talking to doctors, talking to patients, nurses and service providers—all of them are saying there's something wrong with the system. They are complaining about the system. No one can deny that. We can argue or debate what should be done, but we all agree something has to be done.

One of the important improvements I think we should look into in every aspect or every solution we have is technology. Modernizing the systems, linking the systems together, having information sharing between the different providers makes a significant difference for the patient experience.

Being a patient in one of the instances where I can have some service from a service provider and then I get handed paperwork and told, "You go and figure out the next step" is not acceptable. Working with multiple agencies, multiple arms or multiple separate stand-alone agencies that sometimes have their own bylaws on sharing information, or restricted to sharing information due to their knowledge of the laws or knowledge of sharing policies, in the end makes patients suffer.

Having all this collected under one umbrella will enable and make it seamless for the patient to receive service in any part of the service we are talking about.

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

Mr. Ian Arthur: I appreciate the opportunity to rise and contribute to this debate. I'm glad the member from Ottawa West–Nepean brought up his experience with his family health team, because what he's talking about is a model of paying health professionals called the capitation model. It's something that the Liberals started. They decided to move towards a more inclusive health practice, but then they got afraid of the cost and they capped how many organizations could exist under that model, so now we have dual systems. We have a fee-for-service system, which is the older one on how doctors were paid, and a capitation system, which is the family health teams he was talking about.

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I worry very much about how hard it is to actually deliver health care in this province and how complicated it is. I worry that everything Liberal is inherently bad and everything Progressive Conservative is inherently good now. The realities of delivering that are incredibly difficult and incredibly expensive, and I question whether this government is going to put the funds behind it that are needed to do a good job in delivering this.

You have agencies that love the LHINs; you have agencies that struggle to interact with the LHINs. There are always two sides to the story. I don't see that a super-bureaucracy is going to have the answers that the LHINs fail to have. I understand the idea of bringing them together and merging them and trying to find efficiencies but, simply, the mechanics of delivering that funding to the agencies that are on the front-lines, that give those services to the community, are hard to set up.

How is this government going to take all of those channels and all of those things that were established—they're throwing them out. They're trying to bring in a new system. I question how different logistically it is actually going to be at the end of the day.

We need to put the money into health care, and there is no other way about it. Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Now we return to the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas for final comment.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I thank my fellow members for their weighing in on such an important issue as the crisis that is in our health care system. I would like to underscore some of the concerns that have been raised in this House about the idea of a super-agency, a super-bureaucracy.

We talked earlier about how the experience in Britain has been that people feel that the health care is removed from their local experience. We now have heard concerns from the Franco community, from the northern community, where they already feel underserved. They already feel disconnected from the health care system.

The idea of a health care system is that we all have access to the same standard of care wherever we live in this province. This super-bureaucracy is not going to make that better. In fact, it's going to make it worse. Evidence from the experiences of other jurisdictions that have tried this scheme are showing that it has failed, so it really boggles my mind why this government is going down this route.

And then we can only guess that there is this idea of privatization. Every time we say that we have fears, that the people of Ontario have fears about privatization, we're told that this is not the case. Then put it in the bill. It's simple. If you want to end this concern, if the government truly wants to reassure 14 million Ontarians that they are not trying to siphon off profits from our health care system to mega-corporations, it's a simple, simple fix: Put it in the bill.

If you don't believe me, travel this bill. Go and speak to the people of Ontario whose health care you are planning to transform without consulting them. Go to the

north. Go to the Far North. Go to my seatmate Mr. Mamakwa's riding of Kiiwetinoong. See what his health care system looks like. Don't sit here, in the Premier's office, in this Legislature, isolated from the people of Ontario. Go and speak to the people this health care act is intended to address.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 74. I do want to say that the member from Kingston and the Islands I think gave a very good response to the member's speech. We're all here for the same reasons. We're here because we care about our communities and we care about health care. That's the most important thing we do, I believe. It's the most important thing we do for our families and for the families of the people who we represent.

The interesting thing in this debate—I've listened to the minister's speech and some of the speeches of other members with regard to this legislation and what it means. It's the same thing we've been saying for 30 years, all of us—different places, different times—about what we want to do with the health care system and on who it should be centred. They're pretty much the same words. Sometimes we change them. The intent is the thing we know is there; it's the execution that's the challenge.

I want to talk a bit about the risks of the kinds of changes that are being suggested in this bill and the risks of the powers that exist in there, because I think they're critical for all of us to realize as we go forward, not just for the next five to 10 years, but 15, 20, 25 years.

The challenge is right now—and the member from Ottawa West—Nepean articulated that very well. We all know that. That's why we opened up, essentially, a hospital in downtown Toronto last year. It's why we did 1,100 surge beds, and you continued those 1,100 surge beds. There are people there right now waiting in emergency rooms, waiting in places where they don't need to be, waiting for home care. This bill will not do anything for them right now, next week, next month, next year, two years from now, three years from now.

The changes you're suggesting that you want to make are a pretty big right turn. It's from a local community-based model of decision-making into a centralized one. I'll go into that later. So the proof will be in the pudding: How do you solve that problem of hallway medicine when you're in a revenue box? The FAO is downstairs talking about that right now and the challenges. It takes money. That problem is right here, right now, and it's incumbent upon all of us to solve that problem.

How is this going to solve the problem of access to palliative care? This bill will not—not right now, not a year from now, not two years from now, not three years from now. I guarantee you. What's needed here is, what is the government's commitment to fixing those things for those people who are stuck in the hallways or waiting for access to palliative care or actually not being able to access their primary care provider? Ninety-four per cent of Ontarians have a primary care provider but they can't get them when they need them. And where do they end up? In

emergency rooms or sicker. That's a right-now problem. We can talk about transformation, but this is a right-now problem.

No matter what side you're on and when you've been in charge in this Legislature, when you've had government, whether it was the NDP or us or you, there are always challenges in the health care system. So if anybody comes to you and says, "I have the solution for health care"—it doesn't exist. What exists is the constant effort to improve on the gains that we've made and correct the mistakes of the past. That's what we do in health care. You're never finished. You fix one thing; there's something else to fix. The government needs to focus on this now.

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: To the member opposite: I can talk to him about wait times. I can talk to him about the best cancer results in the world, and this bill actually repeals the Cancer Act, which is one of the reasons why we have some of the best results in the world. So I appreciate the heckle, but the minister here knows that it's his responsibility—his responsibility—to ensure that the resources for those problems I've just brought out are taken care of now, not three years from now, not five years from now. And as the FAO said, you're putting yourself in a pretty tight fiscal box.

I've talked a bit about the concerns right now. I've talked about the concerns right now. I want to talk a bit about the risks that exist here. When you take a system and you turn it on its head, when you take a system that's localized, based on community decision-making, and you centralize it, you restructure, you bureaucratize, you create a bureaucracy, the end result is only borne by those people at the end of the line: patients, their families, the people who provide care. That's where people fall between the cracks.

Do you know the thing about government? We don't really do a good job of measuring how many people fall between the cracks, about what the patient experience is, what's actually happening on the front lines. It's a really hard thing to do. Those are the voices that are hardest to hear. When you suggest what the government is suggesting in the future in this bill, you're turning something on its head, and in that duration of time in which you restructure—I know the minister says it's going to be three years. It takes 10 years to build a hospital in Ontario, and that's fast—it used to be 17—five years to build a hospice. So the kind of transformation that the government is talking about here and the time frame will be, I argue, injurious to patients and families. There are people who will fall between the cracks. We won't see them until there are too many of them. And I know, because I've seen this before. I've seen when 26 hospitals are closed. I've seen when decision-making was centralized, as you're doing, just bringing it all to downtown Toronto.

So in Ottawa, what did we have to do? We had to fight for the Montfort. The community had to rise up to save the CHEO cardiac unit because the centralized decision-making—not local decision-making—was saying, "No, we're just taking that away from you."

Here's the power that's in this bill: The minister has the power, in 30 days, to restructure, close down or amalgamate any health care provider that's out there—30 days, no appeal.

Who owns the Brockville hospital? Is it the government of Ontario? No, it's the people of Brockville. They gave 10%. That 10% was really hard to get, but they own it. So are you willing, 10 or 15 years from now, in your community, to allow a board of 12 people and a minister of the day to say, "Brockville, in 30 days you're part of the Ottawa Hospital"? Or, "You know what? We're closing you down because you can just go to Kingston." That's a risk. You may say, "No, no, no, we're not going to do that." You did close 26 hospitals. Let's say I believe you, but how do I know, five years from now, that's not going to happen and that we haven't given too much power to a group of individuals who weren't elected?

In this bill, there's no democratic recourse. There's no shareholder meeting where people can come and say to this board of 12 people, "Hey, I'm not happy. Why are you doing this?" There's not even a provision in this bill where we do that, and we represent those people. It's crazy. That's a piece that's missing that's really important. You may say, "We're not going to do that. We have the best plans. We're pure of heart." And I believe that. I hope nobody took that the wrong way. But the concern is, you're giving unchecked power that will go off into the future and you have no control over that. There needs to be a check and a balance, and there's not a check and a balance in this bill.

I'm checking on my time here; I've only got a few minutes left before—three minutes? Thank you, Speaker.

What I urge the government to do is to think about how we want to govern our health care, how we want the people to be able to have input, be able to criticize, be able to be part of the decision-making. There are LHINs where there are good experiences and bad experiences. I'm not here to defend the LHINs, but I am here to defend local decision-making. When you rip away local decision-making and you park it here in downtown Toronto, we all know what the end result is. There are members on the other side of this House who know how that centralization affected their communities and hospital closures.

Are you willing to say that you're going to let a board of 12 unelected people and a minister be able to say that this really great community organization that does wonderful work in health care in my community—well, the minister is amalgamating it with somebody else? I know what you would say. I know what you would say if it happened to you while you were in government; we wouldn't hear it, because you'd be saying it inside caucus or to the minister. But I know what you'd say on this side of the House. You'd be really upset, and your community would be upset.

The biggest challenge that's in this bill right now is it removes local decision-making and parks it here in downtown Toronto, and that's not good. So I hope that when you're looking at this bill and you're drafting amendments, you make sure that the local is not totally lost, because when I look at this bill, that's what I see.

Speaker, I think you want to get up.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): You're a mind-reader. I did want to get up and I did get up. It is now 10:15. To the member from Ottawa South: You will have an opportunity to continue your debate once this bill comes back into the Legislature again for debate.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): But since it is now 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ian Arthur: It's my absolute pleasure today to introduce the Johnson family. They are the parents of Collin, who is the page captain for today. We are joined in the members' gallery by his mother, Kelly; his father, Todd; and his sister, Laura. Welcome to the Legislature. It's absolutely wonderful to have you here.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Introduction of visitors? I recognize the President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Mr. Speaker, finally I'm recognized early.

It's my pleasure to introduce to the House two of my constituents, Flora Waters and Colin Waters. They are the grandparents of page Pieter Waters, who is from the same great riding as the member from Windsor—Tecumseh. I'd like to thank you for coming to Queen's Park.

I also would like to welcome the federal member from Durham, who goes by the moniker of "son of John O'Toole," the great MP Erin O'Toole from Durham. Welcome.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: It's my pleasure to welcome, from Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Deputy Grand Chief Derek Fox and one of his staff, Gina Fata, and also my staff, Anne Chabot.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I want to take a moment to welcome participants of the 12th annual Canadian Black Caucus who are here in the Legislature today, and I would like to do that on behalf of the Liberal caucus. This is their 12th year of being in the Legislature. You'll see lots of young people from across Ontario here today. I want to welcome them to the Legislature and take a moment to thank Gwyn Chapman and all the other people that made this happen. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

Ms. Lindsey Park: It's a great honour to introduce the member for Durham, the Honourable Erin O'Toole, federal member of Parliament, here with us. I also see the federal member of Parliament for Prince Albert, Randy Hoback, here. Thanks for joining us. They're both joining us for the Highway of Heroes Tree Campaign reception. I hope all members will join us. It's hosted by the member for Northumberland—Peterborough South in room 340 after question period.

Mr. John Vanthof: I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the board and staff of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. They're here for a couple of days educating us on how our food is produced and how we keep it safe.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I would like to welcome the members of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture to the Legislature today. Alongside some of my colleagues, we met with them this morning for a wonderful breakfast discussion to discuss important issues that the sector is facing. We want to welcome them all to Queen's Park.

Mr. Paul Miller: Today is Tourism Day here at Queen's Park, and from the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario I'd like to welcome Troy Young, David Peacock, Brad Butt, Kevin Eshkawkogan, Rebecca McKenzie and Rick Layzell. Welcome.

Mr. David Piccini: It's a great pleasure to welcome two constituents of mine, and also a distant relative from Newfoundland—don't let the last name fool you; half Newfie as well—Lloyd and Sue Johnson. They are also celebrating their 49th wedding anniversary. Welcome to Queen's Park.

I'd also like to remind members of the Highway of Heroes Tree Campaign event in room 340. I hope you will join us. A special thank you to member of Parliament Erin O'Toole for joining us for that—of course, Randy Hoback as well. I'd also like to acknowledge Brad Butt, former member of Parliament for Mississauga–Streetsville. You could practically have a caucus reunion here today. There are so many of you. But welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I would like to recognize the 12th annual Canadian Black Caucus event, Inspiring Youth Politically, happening today at Queen's Park to encourage young people to get involved in the political process, organized by founder and long-time community organizer, Gwyn Chapman, with the assistance of Island Spice.

We would like to welcome the students attending from Jack Miner Senior Public School, Scarborough–Guildwood; Winona Drive Senior Public School, Toronto–St. Paul's; Uchenna Academy, Davenport; Balmoral Drive Senior Public School; Brampton Centre; Central Tech high school, University–Rosedale; York University, Humber River–Black Creek; Ryerson University, Toronto Centre; and Stephen Mensah from York South–Weston. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Bill Walker: I'd like to introduce and welcome Mr. Bryan Plumstead, who is the manager of tourism in Grey county, here as part of the tourism reception and lobby day; the Honourable Erin O'Toole, the treasured son of Johnny O., our former colleague, mentor and MPP; Pat Jilesen and Keith Currie from the OFA, and a special, special happy birthday to Cody Welton, executive director of issues management and legislative affairs. Happy birthday, Cody.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: On behalf of the official NDP Black caucus, I would like to welcome all of the brilliant youth who are at Queen's Park today for the 12th annual Canadian Black Caucus event. Thank you again to Gwyn Chapman, and I can't wait to meet with all of the youth at 11.

Ms. Jill Dunlop: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I have the privilege of introducing a few guests this morning. From the great riding of Simcoe North, I would like to welcome Ms. Rolston and her students from Twin Lakes

Secondary School, as well as my guests Glen and Rosie Heatherington. Thank you for being here today.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: This morning, I'm delighted to welcome Ms. Olga Sawchuk from my riding. Today, she will be receiving the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It's my pleasure today to welcome to the House members of the Canadian Black Caucus and the organizers, Gwyn Chapman and Jennifer Matherson, and all of the young people who are here to participate in the conference, Inspiring Youth Politically. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Steve Clark: It's tourism day at Queen's Park. I'd like to welcome representatives of the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, but specifically I want to welcome a constituent from my riding of Leeds–Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes. I'd like to welcome Kathrine Christensen, who is the executive director of 1000 Islands Tourism. Please give her a warm welcome. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to welcome Allan Carswell, president of the Carswell Family Foundation. Speaker, Allan taught physics at York, and his research on laser terrain mapping systems helped guide the 2007 Phoenix space mission to Mars. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. John Yakabuski: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park, to question period, for the very first time Terry Angiers, who is the father of my legislative assistant Trent Angiers. He's travelling today from Newcastle.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'd like to welcome some friends from my riding: Lynnette Bain, who is the vice-president of Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island—or TWEPI—and Ben Leblanc-Beaudoin, who is a rock star chef and owns the Iron Kettle B&B. He's in the building today, as well as their colleague, Rebecca Mackenzie, here for the Taste of Ontario reception. We welcome them here today.

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: It's my pleasure to welcome the former MP for Mississauga–Streetsville, Brad Butt. Mr. Butt is serving now as a VP for government relations and stakeholder relations for the Mississauga Board of Trade. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm delighted to welcome a Western University student and London West constituent, Brienna French, who is here today. Brienna was an amazing campaign volunteer for me and is the co-founder of the Western University NDP club.

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Mr. Paul Calandra: I too would like to welcome my former colleagues Brad Butt, Randy Hoback and Erin O'Toole. As well, I would like to welcome—she is going to be very embarrassed—my legislative intern, Nikki Romano, who is doing a great job in my office.

Mr. Chris Glover: It's my honour to welcome to the house Hitesh Pandya from the Ontario Pharmacists Association, as they are holding their Queen's Park lobby day.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: As part of Tourism Day, I'd like to welcome Michael Crockatt, president and CEO of Ottawa Tourism.

I'd also like to extend a warm welcome to three former colleagues from Parliament Hill: Mr. Brad Butt, Mr. Erin O'Toole and Mr. Randy Hoback. I look forward to seeing Mr. Hoback and Mr. O'Toole in a new government come October.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Okay. We don't make any political statements. Members know that we don't make any political statements. We're way over time.

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to acknowledge and thank my good friend Peyton Veitch, who is the LA in our office. It's his birthday today. Peyton, thank you for everything you do for us, for making us work.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: It's my pleasure to welcome to the House my friends from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, especially the provincial director from Bruce county, Pat Jilesen.

Mr. Will Bouma: I'd just like to welcome Peggy Brekveld, and Larry Davis from the federation of agriculture. He is our town crier in the county of Brant.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: I'm honoured to have my father, Mr. William Crawford, who is here to see not me, but his granddaughter Michelle, a page.

Mr. Vincent Ke: I would like to welcome some very special guests from the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario to the Legislature today. They are Beth Potter, Michael Crockatt, Andrew Weir, Lorrie McKee, Chuck Thibeault, Minto Schneider, Steve Ball, Bryan Plumstead and Kathrine Christensen. The Tourism Industry Association of Ontario is hosting their lobby day today at Queen's Park, and I hope to see everyone at their reception this evening.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: There is one person who hasn't been introduced in the chamber today. I'd like to welcome the former president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, who is from my riding: Don McCabe. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm very pleased to welcome some of my constituents: Greg Martin and Kara Halonen, and their daughter Teagan Martin, who is eight. She will be nine in May, and she is here as a very strong autism advocate. Welcome to Queen's Park, Teagan.

Mr. Ross Romano: I would like to welcome a friend in the gallery from the great riding of Sault Ste. Marie, someone who knocked on some doors with me in two consecutive elections within just over a year: Nick Kowaleski. Thank you, Nick.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our introductions of guests. We allowed this to go past the allotted time. I recognize that there was some anxiety on the part of some members; I can only recognize one member at a time. I would ask each of you to keep your introductions brief—no political statements—and let's keep that in mind for tomorrow.

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I have an important matter that I wish to address the House with, and I would ask for your attention.

On two occasions early in this 42nd provincial Parliament, during the special summer sitting, I addressed the House on the subject of how the eight independent members would be included in our daily proceedings and debates. In doing so, I explained to the House that I was prepared to exercise my discretion under the standing orders and, accordingly, independent members would be given reasonable opportunities to participate in this House in accordance with and in proportion to the opportunities all other members have to place a question and speak in debate.

We did mathematical calculations, carefully and thoroughly. We determined that the eight independent members should be each given the opportunity to ask a question once every eight sitting days, which effectively meant we would anticipate one independent member's question each day. This approach also provided the House the advantage of some degree of predictability and certainty, which reduced confusion and allowed all of us, on both sides of the House, to plan and prepare. Again, at the outset of this Parliament: eight independent members, eight questions, over eight days.

However, with the passage of time in this Parliament, the number of independent members has grown from eight to 11. We have once again done the math, again seeking to ensure that independent members should have the chance to participate in the House in accordance with and in proportion to the opportunities all other members have. In order to fairly accommodate the 11 independent members, I am prepared to allow one independent member question every day, with a second question every Tuesday, as well as, starting today, a second question every alternate Wednesday. This approach will result in 11 opportunities for independent members' questions over eight sitting days.

I recently received a written request from the member for Ottawa–Vanier asking that I allow the independent members to manage the order of their questions, forgoing the requirement to seek the consent of the House to permit one independent member to ask an additional question in place of another member. To accede to this request could have the effect of permitting one or more independent members to have a disproportionately high number of opportunities to ask questions compared to every other member of the House. I would add that while standing order 38(a) confers upon the Speaker the discretion to allow independent members to participate in question period, there is no standing order which gives the Speaker the authority to grant the rights of a recognized party upon a group of members who are not a recognized party. For these reasons, I am not able to consent to this request.

I should add that when a similar situation such as exists today occurred in this House in 1999 and again in 2003, it was addressed by way of a motion adopted by the House in one case, and the achievement of recognized party status following a by-election in the other.

Another request from the member for Ottawa–Vanier suggests that I should allow the seven independent members, which in the past I have recognized as the Liberal

group, the ability to split the 20-minute speaking times allotted to them in debates. In a previous statement, I noted that the 20-minute speaking time could only be used by a single one of the seven Liberal members, since the ability to split speaking time is prescribed by the standing orders and outside the Speaker's discretion.

However, in asking that I revisit this decision, the member for Ottawa–Vanier argued that ability to split time as referenced in standing order 24(d) is not limited to “recognized parties,” but simply to members of a party. Given the fact that I permitted the Liberal members to pool their individual speaking times into one larger allotment based on their affiliated status, and consistent with the solution that Speaker Curling granted in a similar situation in his ruling of November 27, 2003, I am prepared to agree to this request. Going forward, members of the Liberal caucus may therefore divide their speaking times during debates, covered by standing order 24, with another member or members of the Liberal group.

I want to thank the member for Ottawa–Vanier for her submission and thank the House for your attention to my remarks this morning.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Acting Premier. Yesterday, former deputy OPP commissioner and acting OPP commissioner Brad Blair released a statement thanking the OPP and the people of Ontario for allowing him to provide 33 years of unblemished police service. That service ended yesterday, when the Premier once again interfered politically and had Commissioner Blair fired.

It is getting increasingly obvious that the only way to hold the Premier to account is through a public inquiry. Will the Acting Premier back that inquiry today?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I understand the supremacy of this House, but I cannot allow the NDP members to suggest in any way that there was political interference with Mr. Blair's termination. Again, I will remind the members that Mr. Blair's employment with the Ontario Provincial Police was terminated as a result of a recommendation and agreement by the nine-member Public Service Commission. The action was taken in full consultation with Commissioner Gary Couture.

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No one is above the law, not a constable and not a deputy commissioner. When we swear an oath to uphold the laws in this province, we have a responsibility to ensure that that happens. That is why Mr. Blair's termination happened on Monday morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. John Vanthof: In his letter, the former acting commissioner notes that he raised “serious issues of real

and/or perceived political interference with the independent operations of the OPP to the provincial Ombudsman.” It's obvious to all that this is true. But the minister seems to think it's okay to fire a distinguished officer for raising these concerns.

Does the Acting Premier believe that there is anything wrong with a senior police officer raising concerns about political interference?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: As long as we are quoting letters, I want to begin with: This individual “used his uniform and position as deputy commissioner to further his own personal gain ... he violated the trust of his office.”

To quote another letter, sent to Brad Blair upon his dismissal—Speaker, I will quote from it: “You have no authority to unilaterally disclose confidential government emails in furtherance of your personal interests.

“The disclosure is both a contravention of your obligations under the conflict-of-interest regulation made under the” PSOA “and a violation of the oath of office you took as a public servant.”

It's a “clear attempt to use your professional status to further your private interests.”

Speaker, I understand that we have a responsibility to uphold the laws. I only wish the NDP understood it as well.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: The former acting commissioner also stated that he believed raising this issue was, “the right thing to do.” Ontarians would agree. The only ones who don't are the Minister of Community Safety and the Premier. Will the government call a public inquiry?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: There is actually quite a long list of individuals who don't believe that Mr. Blair was using his office appropriately, starting with the commissioner of the OPP, Gary Couture, starting with a nine-member commission of the Ontario public service.

We have to ensure that people who choose to serve our public and sign oaths of office are prepared to represent them and live up to them. I cannot understand why the NDP do not understand that when you sign an oath of office, when you prepare and say that you are going to defend those rights, you do that. When you don't, we are going to act and the Ontario Public Service Commission is going to act.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again to the Acting Premier: Brad Blair has stated that he feels his dismissal was a reprisal for speaking out, and few would disagree. We on this side of the House know it. The media knows it. The public knows it. I think even the backbenchers on the other side know it. If the government is so confident that all of us are wrong, why don't they prove us wrong and call a public inquiry?

Interjections.

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

The question has been put to the Deputy Premier.

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Again, it's pretty clear that the Public Service Commission made a decision that Mr. Blair had breached his duties as both an officer of the OPP and a public servant.

I will quote from Mr. Blair's termination letter: It "is a clear attempt to use your professional status to further your private interests by implying that the legal activities in which you are engaged are part of your official duties and/or sanctioned by the OPP. This is also a contravention of your obligations under the conflict-of-interest regulation."

I quote again: "You have acted in a manner that is incompatible with the faithful discharge of your position as a public servant."

The only thing I would like to add is, to all of the OPP officers who serve our province, I think we have a duty to them to make sure that the oath they have signed is appropriate. This individual chose not to do that. That is why he is no longer with the—

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

Mr. John Vanthof: In interviews last year after the former acting commissioner spoke out, the Premier stated, "Someone needs to hold him accountable, I can assure you that."

Does the Acting Premier expect anyone to believe that this was not an act of reprisal?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I really do feel like I have to remind the members opposite that Mr. Blair's employment was terminated by a decision of a nine-member panel of deputy ministers—that's code for "not political"—that made up the Public Service Commission. This action was taken in full consultation with OPP commissioner Gary Couture.

No one is above the law. I don't care how you serve; I want you to uphold the laws of this province, to uphold the oath that you took when you chose to become an OPP officer. This individual chose not to do that. That is why he is no longer with the OPP.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: The Premier is telling people to believe the impossible: that the man who blew the whistle on his plan to hire his friend as OPP commissioner, who told the world about his plans for an off-the-book camper van with reclining leather seats, and a decorated police officer whom the Premier pledged to hold accountable, was not fired as an act of reprisal. If the Premier truly expects people to believe him—or the Deputy Premier—he can do the right thing today: Stop dodging questions and call a public inquiry.

My question to the Acting Premier, and to every one of the members of the government here today, is, why don't you call on the Premier to do that? No one is above the law, including the Premier of this province.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Again, I will remind the members of the NDP that when you do not agree with your oath of

office, you don't get to continue to serve as an OPP officer in the province of Ontario.

There is no van. This individual didn't get the job he applied for. He is angry. He has chosen a path. We are supporting the decision of the Public Service Commission to rescind his order in council because he no longer works for the OPP, because the OPP did not support his actions and believe that he contravened his oath of office as an Ontario public servant.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Through you, Speaker, to the Deputy Premier: For months, the Premier has insisted that an extraordinary series of coincidences has magically occurred here in Ontario. Even though he wasn't qualified to apply for the initial job posting, the Premier expects us all to believe that independent civil servants happened to pick his old friend Ron Taverner. And now, after months of publicly ranting about Brad Blair and how Brad had to pay for speaking out about his concerns, the Premier expects us to believe that independent civil servants decided to fire Brad Blair, a 33-year veteran of the Ontario Provincial Police force.

Will the Deputy Premier go on the record today and tell us whether she thinks that this is credible?

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

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Speaker, as you and all members of this Legislative Assembly know full well, the Integrity Commissioner is an independent officer of the assembly. He has been doing an investigation and preparing a report on the hiring process for the OPP commissioner. I am not going to presuppose what the Integrity Commissioner will report upon. I will anxiously await his report, as I'm sure all of you do as well.

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The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, you'll have to forgive me, but I'll trust the word of a police veteran with a distinguished record over the word of a Premier with a shady record any day of the week in this House. That's just me, Speaker—

Interjections.

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

I would ask the member for Essex to be careful with his language so as to not cause disruption in the House.

Member for Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Speaker. If the part-time Premier is so confident in his facts, will he have the courage today to call for a full public inquiry?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Listen, Speaker, I understand that the member opposite is upset that the majority of Ontario voters chose Premier Ford to serve as our Premier. I understand that he's not satisfied that the majority of the people of Ontario sent the Progressive Conservatives to serve as their government in Ontario. I understand that, but he has to understand that I believe in the integrity and the

independence of the Integrity Commissioner. I will await his report because ultimately I will never question the integrity of the independent officers of the Legislative Assembly.

Interjection: Unlike the NDP.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Unlike—

Interjections.

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

HOUSING POLICY

Mr. Roman Baber: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. During the fall consultations, municipalities and stakeholders told us that the growth plan changes the Liberals imposed on municipalities without consultation just prior to the election are simply not working. It was a top-down approach that hurt municipalities, harmed the economy and slowed down the building of new housing.

We also know that the previous Liberal government took no action to address the lack of housing, which resulted in the housing crisis in which we find ourselves today. Can the minister please explain what he and his ministry have been doing to combat these harmful changes and instead increase the housing supply in the greater Golden Horseshoe and across Ontario?

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to thank the good member from York Centre for that excellent question. There's no doubt that Ontario is growing, particularly in the greater Golden Horseshoe. In the next 20 years, the greater Golden Horseshoe will accommodate 85% of the province's population growth. That's why it was a priority of our government to cut red tape and make it faster to build housing for all Ontarians and increase the housing supply and availability of homes in that region that people can afford.

Our proposed changes to the growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe give local communities the flexibility over how and where they grow. It will ensure that communities will grow and prosper while protecting the environment and health and safety. I look forward to the supplementary from this member.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Roman Baber: Thank you, Minister, for making housing in the greater Golden Horseshoe and across Ontario a priority.

Back to the minister: We know you're working hard to bring more housing to the region while maintaining protections for the greenbelt, agricultural lands, the agri-food sector, provincially significant employment zones and the natural heritage system.

The growth fund created by the previous Liberal government was done without thought or consultation. It was not practical, and it could not be implemented. It is reassuring that our government takes a different approach to finding the best solutions on housing. Can the minister speak to what he and the ministry have been doing to consult Ontarians on growth plan amendments as well as ways to increase housing supply?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, thanks to the member for that question. This past fall, our government held extensive consultations with businesses, the agricultural sector and the research and development sector as well as municipalities and others about the challenges they had with the previous Liberal government's rushed changes to the growth plan.

When we posted our proposed changes to the growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe online for public consultation, we also held numerous regional round tables to get further feedback from their communities within the greater Golden Horseshoe. We're committed to working together with all stakeholders, such as our Indigenous and municipal partners, to bring forward a thoughtful plan that has been developed through consultation and that will protect the environment, create jobs and increase the supply of housing in Ontario.

We held those public consultations on our Housing Supply Action Plan as well. I'm pleased to report that we received over 2,000 submissions. Our government is a government that listens.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: I hope the government is listening to this question.

The opposition to the disastrous Conservative autism plan keeps rolling in. School principals are urging this government to delay changes and reconsider. Kinark Child and Family Services, one of the regional service providers, has also come out against the plan.

Tomorrow, parents from across Ontario will be on the front lawn to demand that this government go back to the drawing board. Acting Premier, who from your so-called government for the people will come out to speak to them?

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

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much to the Deputy Premier. I appreciate her leadership here today.

Of course, there is a diversity of opinions, whether it's parents, whether it is service providers, whether it's those who have lived experience with autism. But I will tell you, the opinion of this government is that we are going to clear the wait-list of 23,000 children, or three out of four children in Ontario, who have been denied service by their Ontario government—by clearing the wait-list in the next 18 months, by doubling our investment into diagnostic hubs and providing direct support to moms and dads to choose the best services that they feel for their children, whether that is behavioural support, technological aids, caregiver training or respite.

But the opinion that I will not share is the opinion of the previous Liberal administration that ignored three out of four children, or 75% of the kids with autism in the province of Ontario. We're going to clear the wait-list.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: The only thing that this minister got right is that there are opposing opinions, and it's hers against everyone else's.

The members opposite know the autism plan isn't working. The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services used to oppose age cut-offs and supported needs-based services. I'll quote the minister: "Many families have been waiting for years for this necessary support for their child. Now they have been pulled off the wait-list by the minister because their child is over five years old. Just imagine how devastating that is to be so close to receiving this necessary support and then have it be ripped away from you." I wonder if the minister still agrees with herself.

Will the Acting Premier encourage her members to join parents on the front lawn tomorrow? Perhaps the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services would like to come out for that photo op.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I don't know where to begin with that question, Speaker.

Let me be perfectly clear: This was a member who said on November 4, 2015: "They have known for years about the devastating impact of these wait-lists." That member there talked about needing to clear the wait-list. That's why our government is committed to clearing the wait-list in 18 months.

They were for supporting wait-lists until our government brought it in, and then they opposed it. They were for regulating service professionals until this government brought it in, and then they opposed it. They supported bringing in direct funding until this government brought it in, and now they oppose it. Why are they so inconsistent on the other side? Is it because all they want to be is the new democratic protest party?

TUITION

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. I know from speaking with students and families that skyrocketing fees for university and college in Ontario became increasingly unaffordable under the previous Liberal government. Since 2006, undergraduate tuition for Ontarians has risen from an average of \$5,000 to almost \$9,000.

As the minister knows, our government was elected on a promise to put more money back into people's pockets. Can the minister tell us what steps this government is taking to make university and college affordable for students and families?

1110

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite from Scarborough–Rouge Park for his excellent advocacy for students and families in Ontario.

Speaker, the reforms that our government announced to reduce tuition and address the Ontario Student Assistance Program and ancillary fees are about ensuring the sustainability and affordability of post-secondary education for years to come. Our government's across-the-board 10% tuition reduction is the first of its kind in Ontario and will provide real relief for families and students. The reforms we made to the Ontario Student Assistance Program are

going to ensure that the program is sustainable for years to come. Meanwhile, the Student Choice Initiative will treat students like adults and allow them to opt out of fees they don't support or need.

Our plan is financially sustainable and it will provide real relief and choice for Ontario students and families.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: Thank you to the minister for that answer. Speaker, it is shameful that under the previous Liberal government, tuition was allowed to skyrocket. I am proud that our government is the first in Ontario's history to take action and to stop the trend of skyrocketing tuition fees for students. Meanwhile, I'm proud that our government has recognized the additional burden of ever-increasing ancillary fees and is giving students and families choice to save more money through the Student Choice Initiative.

While tuition fees have nearly doubled since 2006, ancillary fees can be as high as \$2,000, and the previous Liberal government did nothing to stop them increasing year over year. Can the minister tell us how much students in my riding could save because of our government's historic action?

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

Speaker, the member is right to say that students and families will see real relief and substantial savings with our 10% tuition reduction. For example, in the member's riding, a student studying public relations management at Centennial College will save \$670 next year thanks to our government's changes. A student studying an honours bachelor of aviation technology at Seneca College will save \$1,230 next year. Finally, a student studying a two-year management MBA at the University of Toronto will save \$5,340 next year.

We were elected on a promise to put more money back into people's pockets, and through our historic tuition reduction and our Student Choice Initiative we are doing just that. I would like to again thank the member for raising this issue.

INDIGENOUS HEALTH CARE

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

My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Last week, the government introduced their latest health care bill, which is portrayed as the biggest overhaul of Ontario's health care system since the introduction of medicare. The minister stood up in this House telling us that she has consulted with thousands of people, but she has failed to engage with First Nations, who will be greatly impacted.

Mr. Speaker, First Nations already face additional barriers in accessing health care. We lost a community member in Cat Lake recently due to the housing and mould issues in the community. Six Nations is one of the largest Indigenous health care providers—not only that, but one of the biggest First Nation communities—in Canada, and they have not been consulted on the development of this bill.

Minister, you say your door is always open, so will you consult with First Nations before voting on the bill?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member opposite for his question. It is something I take very seriously. I have, in fact, consulted with First Nations communities over the course of a number of years, commencing with my position in opposition as health critic for six years, in my work as Ontario's first Patient Ombudsman, and certainly in my position now as Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

This is an important plan for all Ontarians. Everyone deserves to be consulted. I have spoken with thousands of people across Ontario, including First Nations communities. As we come forward and we start speaking about local Ontario health teams, we want to make sure that everyone is represented.

I do expect that there will be interest from First Nations communities in forming part of those teams, and I certainly welcome their involvement in designing the system for their communities, because it is something that—

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I'm presenting a private member's bill on the implementing of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples within Ontario. Article 19 of UNDRIP says that states shall consult with Indigenous peoples through their own representative institutions in order to obtain free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative measures that may affect them. So far, this government has failed to meet these requirements.

What assurances can the minister make to communities like Six Nations that their jurisdiction for health will be recognized before your government votes on this bill?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I respect very much what the member is saying. I can advise that one of my parliamentary assistants spoke with the director of Six Nations health this morning and asked to discuss concerns with her in consultations about how this plan will move forward and how the participation of First Nations communities will be involved.

As I said earlier, I do anticipate that there will be some interest in forming local health Ontario teams—perhaps on an Ontario basis. We want to understand directly from Six Nations and other First Nations communities what will be the best way to proceed to make sure that communities are represented with the kind of health care that is needed by the people in those communities.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Health.

Interjections.

Mr. Jim Wilson: That's okay. I'm used to standing ovations.

Minister, as you know, for many years my riding has been fighting for the redevelopments of the Collingwood

General and Marine Hospital and the Stevenson Memorial Hospital in Alliston. Last year, the hospitals each received \$500,000 in stage 1 planning money, and they're grateful for that. But they are well beyond stage 1 in terms of planning, and they've each incurred well over \$1.5 million.

The hospitals have done everything asked of them by your ministry. In fact, they kind of feel like they're being run around right now.

Can you give me some indication today of when these hospitals will get approval so that they can begin construction on their long-awaited redevelopments? As you know, under the previous government, they were ignored for 15 years. My constituents have waited long enough, and they'd really like to hear some good news from this government.

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for his question. You are, and always have been, a very strong advocate for your communities, for your riding and for your hospitals. I am sorry that you were ignored for 15 years, but please be assured that that is not happening now.

We take the concerns of your hospitals very seriously. As you know, we do have a rigorous process for approving capital projects, and we are certainly paying attention to the needs of your communities and to the expressions of interest by your hospitals.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the minister, Mr. Speaker—with my little jab to the independents here, I've lost my coalition, I guess.

Minister, as you know, the Collingwood hospital is full 100% of the time. Over the next 14 years, their catchment area is expected to grow by 31%.

Stevenson Memorial Hospital in Alliston sees 40,000 patients each year—in fact, it's closer to 50,000 this year—in an emergency room that was built for 7,000 patients some 50 years ago. Their catchment area is expected to grow by 37% over the next 13 years.

1120

These communities are ready. As I said, they've been doing everything asked by your ministry. Major donors are waiting to give money but they're also waiting for the green light from the government before they fully commit. A lot of money has been raised locally. Communities have given you and me their assurance that they will raise their fair share. They're willing to do that in a very quick manner.

So I ask you. You've been invited to tour. I don't know whether you will be allowed or not, but I'm going to ask you: Will you come up, tour the Collingwood hospital and the Alliston hospital, and see first-hand the need?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Again, thank you very much to the member for your advocacy. I am certainly aware that the needs of your community are changing rapidly and that your hospitals are under great stress, as are many of the hospitals across the entire province. I have heard from many members with respect to capital projects in their ridings and hospital expansion projects and so on.

As you know, we do have a rigorous process in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to approve capital

projects because there are many, many requests. The first priority, of course, is going to be patient safety. That has to overtake all other considerations. But we also know that there are many hospitals that are operating under 100% pressures. That is one of the reasons why we have hallway health care. We have—I know I've quoted this statistic many times, but I'll do it again—over 1,000 patients every day in Ontario that are being treated in hospital hallways and storage rooms. That is not acceptable. That is one of the reasons why we are coming forward—

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

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Ross Romano: To the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry: Since the Far North Act became law, the Far North of Ontario has been frozen in time. This has meant a loss of opportunities, including a loss of development, a loss of jobs and a loss of people as they are forced to move away to find employment elsewhere. Anyone who paid attention to the debate when the Liberals pushed this deeply flawed legislation on the Far North cannot be surprised by the result. No one from the Far North asked for or wanted the Far North Act.

But there's good news, Mr. Speaker, because relief is on the way for the Far North, under the leadership of our Premier. Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to learn that our government for the people is collecting public input on the Far North Act. Can the Minister of Natural Resources—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Hon. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member for Sault Ste. Marie for the question and for his tremendous advocacy, always ongoing, for the north. The people and the member are absolutely right to highlight the concerns from the previous Liberal government—that they chose to ignore the views of the north, and particularly of the First Nations.

Our government was elected on a promise to make Ontario open for jobs and open for business. Gathering public input on repealing the Far North Act shows that we are keeping that promise. Our goal is to cut restrictions on important economic development projects in the Far North, such as the Ring of Fire, all-season roads and electrical transmission projects. Unlike the previous Liberal government, we will take the time to appropriately consult with Far North First Nations and Indigenous communities and all other stakeholders, in order to provide a stable environment for business going forward.

They want certainty; we will give them certainty.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mr. Ross Romano: Thank you to the minister for that answer and for his hard work on this important file. Finally we have a government that listens to the people and the concerns of northern communities that the Far North Act has limited their economic opportunities. I want to emphasize that these are not new concerns. The previous Liberal government was told time and time again that lim-

ited economic opportunities would be a direct consequence of implementing the Far North Act. Instead of trying to make life easier for the people of the Far North, they decided to pander to supporters of special interest groups living in their downtown air-conditioned condos.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister expand on his previous answer regarding the countless benefits our actions will bring to the Far North?

Hon. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member for his supplementary. As I've said to the House before, this is too important for us not to get it right. We want to consult with the people who are most affected by the Far North Act. The opportunities that exist in the Far North are some of the greatest in all of Canada, and we need to ensure that Ontario is open for business and open for jobs.

We support development that is beneficial to our communities while maintaining our commitment to conservation. We will retain any land use plans through changes to the Public Lands Act. In addition, we will continue forward with plans already in the advanced stage.

Our government believes wholeheartedly in the potential of northern Ontario. We are committed to making the Far North open for business and open for jobs, like the people of the north have asked for for years, not the Far North Act that the Liberals gave them.

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Suze Morrison: My question is to the Acting Premier.

Hon. John Yakabuski: Deputy Premier.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Deputy Premier. According to Statistics Canada, women in Canada earn 71 cents for every dollar that a man earns. I should note that that number is even lower for Black, Indigenous and immigrant women. Yet, the Premier and his government have stopped implementation of legislation that bridges that wage gap.

Why is this government more interested in asking large employers how much it would cost them to administer pay equity than ensuring that women in Ontario are earning fair wages?

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services and women's issues.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: What a great question, because this government is committed to closing the gender pay gap, to give women the same resources and opportunities to succeed at work and advance women's representation and leadership. We have a strong group of women in our cabinet and in this caucus within this government who are committed to ensuring that women's voices are heard on the eve of International Women's Day, this particular Friday.

I'm looking forward to discussing more in the supplementary with my women's issues critic, but I'm looking forward to tomorrow when, in the afternoon, we will have an opportunity to talk about the progress of women in this province, how we want to empower them economically and the work that our government is doing for the people and for women in particular.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Suze Morrison: Again, back to the Acting Premier: There are real examples of discrimination in pay that women across this province face every single day. Last year, the Ontario midwives won a historic pay equity case that the last Liberal government and this Conservative government have not made good on. In fact, this government decided to retroactively cut funding to the Ontario College of Midwives rather than pay them a fair wage.

Instead of moving forward, this government is telling women to continue to wait for fair wages while businesses fill out surveys. Why does the Premier believe that pay equity for women is red tape?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: This government for the people is absolutely committed to closing the gender gap. That's why myself and the Minister of Labour are working on that very key initiative.

But I want to talk a little bit about International Women's Day and what we'll be doing as a government as we mark equality of all women in the province of Ontario. We know, for example, that women are escaping domestic violence. I was lucky yesterday to be with the member from Oakville as well as Milton to visit two women's shelters to empower the women who are seeking assistance there. I will be unveiling a round table consultation with the members from Mississauga as well as Cambridge as we try to tackle sex trafficking in the province of Ontario.

Let me be perfectly clear: If women who are escaping violence and women who are fleeing sex trafficking are not equal, are any of us? That will be our goal this International Women's Day as we talk about the equality of all women in the province of Ontario.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: My question is to the President of the Treasury Board, Mr. Speaker, as the person with responsibility for allocation of funds. I'm hoping that the minister will be able to bring some clarity with regard to autism funding. Parents and teachers and agencies have not been able to get the answers that they need from this government.

1130

It has become clear over the past few weeks that the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services froze the wait-list and then artificially increased it in order to make the program that you're putting in place look better. The minister claims it was a lack of funds, but honestly, Mr. Speaker, without clear numbers, that really sounds like nothing more than a talking point. The current Minister of Children, Community and Social Services claims that the President of the Treasury Board approved her request for \$100 million in emergency funding for autism services.

Through you, Speaker, can the President of the Treasury Board please confirm that this is in fact correct, and can he confirm what the total budget for autism services is for the 2018-19 year? Is it \$256 million, \$321 million, \$421 million—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. The question is to the President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. The numbers are available, and we've said it many times, that the previous Liberal government's budget was \$256 million. As the record shows, there was \$62 million in holdback which was to be released, because the program—you'd have to ask them why they wanted to hold back \$62 million. The Treasury Board released that money at the request of the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services because it was the right thing to do.

In addition, the minister came forward and asked for an additional \$40 million, Mr. Speaker, because the previous Liberal government's program was broken and she wouldn't stand by and take over a broken program. Treasury Board was more than happy to supply that support.

Interjections.

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

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, it's interesting, because if this were as simple as the member presented it then the portfolio would not have been mismanaged as it has been. Families would not be in the chaos that they're in. They would not be so worried about April 1. The agencies and schools would not be in chaos because they don't know what's going to happen.

Mr. Speaker, the budget was \$321 million. That was the money that was budgeted. The numbers that the President of the Treasury Board is putting forward are just not accurate. I can remember, Mr. Speaker, sitting at the table when our Minister of Children and Youth Services leaned forward to ask for an increase to the budget. That \$256 million—that's just not accurate. So I ask the President of the Treasury Board again: What is the number, what is the total budgeted number for autism services for 2018-19, and why are families finding themselves—

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

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: To the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I want to say thank you very much to the President of the Treasury Board for doing the outstanding work he's doing to clean up the mess of the previous Liberal administration, for releasing \$102 million to me in a time of need, when we inherited a broken and broke program from the previous Liberal administration, which that member was the leader of. Can you believe it? She stands here today—the incredulity that we see. She was part of a government, Speaker, that took parents of—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The House will come to order. Member for Hamilton Mountain, come to order. The clock is ticking. Member for Timmins, come to order.

I'll allow the minister to conclude her response.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: That member bankrupted this province. She was bankrupt of ideas when she left office,

and she bankrupted the Ontario Autism Program. I will take no lessons from the former leader of the Liberal Party. After 15 years of waste, scandal and mismanagement—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. I apologize to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. Once the standing ovation erupted, I couldn't hear what she was saying and I had to stand up and interrupt her.

Start the clock. Next question. The member for Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Deputy Premier. Last week, the government—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I apologize. The Speaker erred in terms of the order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

I'm going to recognize the member for Haldimand-Norfolk.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs—he's right here. A farmers' organization in my riding is always looking for opportunities and support for projects that will help them grow and innovate in the years to come. I do thank Minister Hardeman. A few weeks ago, he came down to visit with our Haldimand federation. So we know that our government is committed to helping farmers and agribusiness to succeed and continue to thrive, without adding those additional burdens in their daily operations. I know that farmers, businesses and organizations in the agri-food sector depend on the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, the CAP program, for various eligible projects.

Speaker, my question: Can the minister provide this House with more detail on the latest intake under the partnership and how it's going to help our farmers and our agribusinesses to grow and to innovate?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to thank the member from Haldimand-Norfolk for the excellent question. In partnership with the federal government, our government announced a new funding intake through the partnership for our farmers and the agri-food businesses and organizations, both open this month. The new intake will focus on eligible projects related to economic development in the agri-food and agri-products sector, and environmental stewardship to enhance water quality and soil health. Additionally, the intake will focus on protection and assurances to reinforce the foundation of public trust in the sector regarding food safety and plant and animal health.

Mr. Speaker, this government supports our farmers. We trust our farmers. Through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, we are empowering our farmers and agribusinesses to make it easier to do business in Ontario so they can continue to do what they do best: feed Ontario's families.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, we do thank the minister for his dedication to our farmers and other related businesses—in this case, providing more support through programs like the Canadian Agricultural Partnership. I know that farmers and agribusinesses in my riding are looking forward to applying for eligible projects to support their goals and to support innovation.

Economic development, environmental stewardship and food safety are some of our government's top priorities. These categories focus on what's important, like safe and healthy food, economic growth, job creation, and protecting our environment for future generations. My question: Can the minister tell us how these intake categories support our government's open-for-business mandate and make life easier for agribusiness and for our farmers?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I thank the member for his question. Our farmers and agribusinesses are leaders in environmental stewardship, food safety and economic development. The agriculture industry is one of the largest economic sectors in the province. There are four jobs waiting for every agriculture industry graduate in Ontario. Our government wants to see those numbers increase.

Our farmers are environmental stewards, always finding the most innovative ways to protect our land, our air and our waterways. Mr. Speaker, our made-in-Ontario environmental plan supports those farmers. We have a food safety system in Ontario and in Canada that works and catches problems before they impact public health. This government wants to help our farmers and other agri-food business operators with the tools and supportive programs they need, like the partnership, to stay competitive and open for business in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Now the member for Waterloo.

SEXUAL ASSAULT CRISIS CENTRES

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Last week, the government released a disappointing amount of one-time funding for sexual assault centres that will equate to less than \$25,000 per centre. The Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo region has over 200 people on the wait-list. This is a 300% increase in survivors who are seeking out support. Think of the courage that it takes to come forward and disclose and ask for help.

This government is failing survivors by allowing them to languish on never-ending wait-lists and rationing support on this file. Will the government commit today to increasing core funding for victim services so that organizations like SASC can support sexual assault survivors in Waterloo region and across this province?

1140

Hon. Christine Elliott: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I agree with the member opposite. It takes a great amount of courage for a victim of sexual assault to come forward, and the work that our sexual assault centres do in our communities across this province is so important. That's why, in addition to

guaranteeing funding for victim services programs across the province, in spite of a \$15-billion deficit left to us by the previous Liberal government, we're increasing funding by \$1 million for sexual assault centres across Ontario.

We will be working closely with victim services programs to allocate that funding, and I'd be happy to talk to the executive director of the sexual assault centre you're talking about today about how they can access some of that funding.

But, Mr. Speaker, let's be clear: The previous Liberal government made these promises on the eve of the election. In fact, I saw letters to sexual assault centres on May 6 and May 7—the day before the writ dropped. That is shameful. We will not leave victims of sexual assault hanging. We are going to work with them to support them.

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Speaker, it is unconscionable to blame victims of sexual assault for the deficit. Do not balance the budget on the backs of victims of sexual assault.

The Sexual Assault Support Centre is doing its best to make up for promised funding that they may never see. All this government has offered is \$25,000 to navigate services that do not exist. In Waterloo, 200 people have navigated themselves to a wait-list at SASC. The real problem is that they're waiting for funding for a counsellor that may never come.

Will this government actually, meaningfully support victims of sexual assault by investing in core funding? You are denying these people hope by leaving them on a wait-list. It is unconscionable; it is unethical. You need to do the right thing today—in fact, for International Women's Day.

Interjections.

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

The Attorney General to reply.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Mr. Speaker, what is unconscionable is that the previous Liberal government made promises on the eve of an election to important service providers, raising their expectations, knowing they were going to saddle the next government with a \$15-billion deficit and over \$350 billion in debt—\$12 billion in interest expense that we cannot spend on victim services programs, \$12 billion in interest expense that we can't give to victim services because they—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. I couldn't hear the Attorney General because of the outburst of applause and the standing ovation from the government side.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Start the clock. Next question.

WASTE DIVERSION

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: My question is for the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. Those of us who call Ontario home can't ask for a better place to live, work and raise our families. In order to preserve and protect the Ontario that we know and love, our government has been working hard on the implementation of our made-in-Ontario environmental plan.

The minister spoke to us yesterday about proposals he posted to the Environmental Registry and our proposal to increase renewable content in our gasoline by 15%. But environmental stewardship doesn't begin and end with climate change.

It's been reported that later today, the minister is scheduled to announce his waste discussion paper outlining our government's approach to tackling this issue. Can the minister share with the House what his approach will be?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member: Thank you for the question. I had the opportunity to visit the member in his constituency last week and saw just what a great job he is doing for the constituents of Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Climate change is an important issue. As the member points out, our 53-page environment plan does contain 12 pages around climate change, but there are other issues as well. Waste and litter are a critical issue to the people of Ontario. Each Ontarian produces over a tonne of waste each and every year. Our recycling rate, our diversion rate, has been stuck at 30% for the last 15 years, and that's not good enough. That's why the paper we'll be releasing later today will ask stakeholders—all stakeholders—to look creatively at approaches being used around the world, approaches that will divert more waste from landfill, approaches that will get litter off our streets and out of our communities and out of our parks, and that will make sure that our environment can be pristine and protected and litter- and waste-free.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I'm glad to see that our government is moving forward on taking the real action our province has been waiting for. For too long, needed reduction in the amount of waste Ontarians generate has been ignored by the previous Liberal government. I've heard these complaints first-hand in my riding of Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Ontarians understand that there's a need for everyone to play their part, and that environmental stewardship is our collective responsibility and can be largely mitigated through our actions close to home.

I know my constituents have some great ideas and suggestions to share with the minister and the people of our province. Can the minister share with us what topics our government will be seeking?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, again through you to the member: Thank you for the question. We'll be looking for input on things like how to divert food and organic waste from households and businesses, how to reduce

plastics and litter in our neighbourhoods and parks, and increasing ways for Ontarians to participate more in waste reduction efforts. We'll be looking for consultation from business and communities about the use of technologies, and the use of practices and approaches that are working around the world to reduce litter.

It's not good enough that we are only diverting 30% of our waste. We have to do better in Ontario. To do that, we'll be consulting with Ontarians, including in Mississauga-Lakeshore, to find out the very best ways that we can make sure that our province is clean and litter-free.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: My questions are to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. For the past few months, the government's own webpage for ordering documents such as birth certificates and death certificates has contained a notice that processing times have more than doubled to 15 weeks, but our constituency offices have been inundated with Ontarians who are left waiting beyond the stated 15 weeks.

We've seen newborn babies at risk of deportation because they had no birth certificate, and families forced to wait as long as six months to lay their parents' ashes to rest, because this government failed to provide a basic service. Does the minister think this is acceptable?

Hon. Bill Walker: Thank you to the honourable member for a great question. Frankly, no, I'm not pleased. In fact, I want to apologize to the people impacted.

There are a variety of factors, sadly, that are impacting this. I just met on Tuesday with bureaucrats in my ministry to understand the situation better. We take this very seriously, and we want improvements. I looked very closely at the people and said, "We will fix this. We need to fix this. I want that mitigation plan."

We are already invoking overtime to try to clear that backlog. We're bringing in more people, to be able to get that through and to understand what the core root of the problem is. We're not just band-aiding this. We're going back through a lean process to look at the exact reasons why this has happened. We will continue to make sure that we will fix this—to the honourable member, and to all the people, most importantly.

Through digitization and modernization, we also are going to hope to put reliability back in the system, and the taxpayer at the centre of everything we can do.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to suggest that if customers have concerns, they can call our centre at 1-800-461-2156. I assure them today on behalf of my party and the government—

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Back to the minister: It has been two weeks since the minister said he would address this backlog plaguing his ministry, yet our offices continue to hear horror story after horror story.

What this minister has not explained is how this ministry allowed the backlog to get out of control in the first place.

Minister, was this backlog created because this government has frozen hiring and put their priorities ahead of the priorities of the people of Ontario?

Hon. Bill Walker: When I met with my ministry staff, what they shared with me was that there were fluctuations, certainly. Volumes are going up; populations are going up. There are a lot of transactions that are increasing.

There are a number of manual problems. When they've gone online, if they don't actually answer correctly, we've got to go off into manual, which takes a lot of time. There are actually significant privatization issues. We can't just take someone's word for it; we have to go through a process to get a signed-off document.

As I've said, we're going right back. We're looking at the whole process. We're going to review the forms and make sure there's clarity. We're going to take that right out of the situation. We're going to ensure, after inheriting 15 years of mismanagement by the Liberals, that we're actually putting the focus on the people of Ontario. We're going to ensure that the people are first, and I assure you this is a priority to me. I am working, and I am going to fly to Thunder Bay myself to make sure I understand the situation until we address it.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Jane McKenna: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. We were elected on a mandate to put the people of Ontario first, end hallway health care and repair our public health care system.

Our government has taken the necessary steps to deliver on our promise. After 15 years of Liberal mismanagement, Ontarians know our health care system is in need of significant improvement. Ontario families expect and deserve a health care system that works for them. That message was delivered clearly by front-line health care practitioners Friday in my riding of Burlington with the Minister of Health. We are proud to report that families in Burlington and everywhere in Ontario will benefit from patient-centred health care.

Could the minister explain why it is essential that, after 15 years, we need to pass The People's Health Care Act, please?

Hon. Christine Elliott: First, I want to thank the member from Burlington for her great question and the great work she's doing. We did have a very interesting and informative meeting last Friday in her riding.

As we all know, Mr. Speaker, our health care system is under great stress right now. Patients are left on long waiting lists, and we have a thousand patients every day receiving health care in hospital hallways and storage rooms. That is why we are fixing and strengthening our public health care system and finally centring it around the patient, where it actually belongs.

We envision a public health care system where patients and families have access to better, faster and more

connected care, a system where everyone who works as a health care provider can finally work together. We will create a public health care system that is centred on patients and one that works for all Ontarians.

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

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I wish to draw members' attention to the fact that we have a former member in the Speaker's gallery: The member for Northumberland in the 38th Parliament and Northumberland-Quinte West in the 39th and 41st Parliaments, Lou Rinaldi. Welcome back to Queen's Park, Lou.

Also in one of the members' galleries, we have the member for Peterborough in the 38th, 39th, 40th and 41st Parliaments, Jeff Leal. Welcome back to Queen's Park. It's good to have you here.

REPORT, FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that the following report has been tabled:

A report entitled Ontario Health Sector: 2019 Updated Assessment of Ontario Health Spending from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario.

DEFERRED VOTES

RESTORING ONTARIO'S COMPETITIVENESS ACT, 2019 LOI DE 2019 VISANT À RÉTABLIR LA COMPÉTITIVITÉ DE L'ONTARIO

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 66, An Act to restore Ontario's competitiveness by amending or repealing certain Acts / Projet de loi 66, Loi visant à rétablir la compétitivité de l'Ontario en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We now have a deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 66, An Act to restore Ontario's competitiveness by amending or repealing certain Acts.

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

The division bells rang from 1153 to 1158.

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

On February 19, 2019, Mr. Smith, Bay of Quinte, moved second reading of Bill 66.

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

Ayes

Anand, Deepak
Baber, Roman
Babikian, Aris
Bailey, Robert

Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Mike
Hogarth, Christine
Jones, Sylvia

Phillips, Rod
Piccini, David
Rasheed, Kaleed
Roberts, Jeremy

Barrett, Toby	Kanapathi, Logan	Romano, Ross
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Karahalios, Belinda	Sabawy, Sheref
Bouma, Will	Ke, Vincent	Sandhu, Amarjot
Calandra, Paul	Khanjin, Andrea	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon	Kusendova, Natalia	Skelly, Donna
Cho, Stan	Lecce, Stephen	Smith, Dave
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd
Coe, Lorne	Martin, Robin	Surma, Kinga
Crawford, Stephen	Martow, Gila	Tangri, Nina
Cuzzetto, Rudy	McKenna, Jane	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Downey, Doug	McNaughton, Monte	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dunlop, Jill	Miller, Norman	Tibollo, Michael A.
Elliott, Christine	Mulroney, Caroline	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fedeli, Victor	Nicholls, Rick	Wai, Daisy
Fee, Amy	Oosterhoff, Sam	Walker, Bill
Fullerton, Merrilee	Pang, Billy	Yakabuski, John
Ghamari, Goldie	Park, Lindsey	
Gill, Parm	Parsa, Michael	

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

Nays

Arthur, Ian	Gélinas, France	Monteith-Farrell, Judith
Bell, Jessica	Glover, Chris	Natyshak, Taras
Bisson, Gilles	Gretzky, Lisa	Rakocevic, Tom
Bourgouin, Guy	Harden, Joel	Sattler, Peggy
Burch, Jeff	Hassan, Faisal	Shaw, Sandy
Coteau, Michael	Hatfield, Percy	Singh, Gurratan
Des Rosiers, Nathalie	Hunter, Mitzie	Tabuns, Peter
Fife, Catherine	Kernaghan, Terence	Vanhof, John
Fraser, John	Mamakwa, Sol	West, Jamie
French, Jennifer K.	Mantha, Michael	Yarde, Kevin
Gates, Wayne	Miller, Paul	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 64; the nays are 32.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated March 5, 2019, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand that the member for Don Valley North has a point of order.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to welcome the board of directors from the Canada Gansu Federation of Chamber of Commerce: their president, secretary, director and vice-president. Welcome to Queen's Park, and enjoy.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): This House stands in recess until 3 o'clock.

The House recessed from 1202 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: It's my pleasure to introduce Alexandra McManus to the House today. She hails from the beautiful city of Manotick in the riding of Carleton,

and she is also my newest volunteer. She helped campaign for me as well.

It's a pleasure to have you here. So thank you, Alex, and welcome.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: It's my pleasure today to welcome my friend George Hatzis to the Legislature.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SICKLE CELL DISEASE

Ms. Jill Andrew: I met with Toronto–St. Paul's community member Ulysse Guerrier, chair of the Sickle Cell Association of Ontario, and Alvin Merchant. Both men live with sickle cell anemia, the first genetically recognized disease.

Sickle cell is a severe illness that impacts red blood cells. It affects the quality of one's life, can destroy families and is often fatal. While sickle cell disproportionately impacts Black and South Asian communities, it is a disease that affects people of all races.

As Ulysse and Alvin emphasize, they've lived one painful day after another, never knowing if a visit to the ER might be their last because of the inconsistent care they receive. A "sickler" may enter the ER looking good on the outside while internally their bodies are waging war. By the time a doctor or nurse decides to believe a patient is in crisis, it's often too late.

We must support the calls of the Sickle Cell Association of Ontario for June 19 to be formally recognized as Sickle Cell Day across Ontario; for recognition of sickle cell as a disability; for increased awareness in schools and workplaces, where sickler absences are often received as laziness rather than illness; and for a universal hospital protocol, ensuring sicklers receive appropriate care everywhere they go.

I proudly stand with Ulysse, Alvin and sickler communities to bring these life-saving demands to light.

HIGHWAY OF HEROES TREE CAMPAIGN

Mr. David Piccini: I'm pleased to rise today to contribute to the Highway of Heroes Tree Campaign. They were here today, and they joined us for a fantastic reception over lunch.

I'd like to thank them for bringing awareness to a vital cause and to some remarkable work they've done, paying a living tribute to the over 117,000 Canadians who've made the ultimate sacrifice.

I'd like to thank the fantastic staff: Mark Cullen, Michael de Pencier, Tony DiGiovanni, Donna Cansfield, Mike Hurley, David Turnbull and, of course, Lieutenant-Colonel Steve Boychyn, who joined us for this great reception to highlight the remarkable work they're doing and to highlight the remarkable work of this cause.

The province of Ontario has committed \$1.1 million to this important cause. They're close to their goal of \$10 million. They're at \$4 million. There's a long way still yet

to go. I'd like to thank them for joining us today. And of course, Lieutenant-Colonel Steve Boychyn, who joined us—I'd like to thank him for his service. He stands for so much more. He stands for all that's great about Canada, our shared values and our country. I thank him for his service and thank them for joining us today.

SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's always an honour to rise in this House and speak on behalf of my constituents of London–Fanshawe. Today I would like to dedicate my time to share a story of the Rodger family, who live in my riding and are struggling to find adult support residential living accommodations for their sons, Patrick and Sean. I met Teresa and Kevin and one of their sons in my office recently. Sean is 29 years old and Patrick is 23. They both have autism. Sean and Patrick have been on a wait-list for residential support housing for 23 years. They have challenging behaviours that their mother, Teresa, as the primary caregiver, has to manage.

As aging parents, it has become increasingly hard to cope with the difficulties of raising their adult children. Kevin's job takes him out of town four days a week, and Teresa is left on her own with health issues after sustaining a fall.

Teresa said, "We are faced with nothing but the grim and hopeless news about lengthy wait-lists for residential services, with no end in sight.

"As parents, we cannot believe there is such a lack of MCSS-funded residential services for adults with developmental disabilities.

"We worry even more with the current government, and assume adults with developmental disabilities living at home with their aging parents are not a priority; this is not acceptable to us."

I am proud to use my time today to bring to light the significant challenges that families like the Rodgers have endured trying to get proper care and housing for their children. This government needs to make it a priority to help families like the Rodgers access the care and housing for their sons that they deserve.

EVENTS IN PARRY SOUND–MUSKOKA

Mr. Norman Miller: I invite members of this Legislature, viewers and all Ontarians to take part in some of the great activities available in Parry Sound–Muskoka this March break.

March brings the beginning of maple syrup season around Ontario. Local groups have come together to create the Muskoka Maple Trail to help you plan your visit. To find places to see the trees being tapped and the sap being boiled down and to taste the delicious, sweet syrup and candy, visit muskokamaple.ca.

This year, the winter weather has provided many other great winter activities across Parry Sound–Muskoka. Enjoy a day of alpine skiing at Hidden Valley Highlands

Ski Area, where all 15 runs are open and in great shape. If cross-country skiing is more your speed, plan to visit Georgian Nordic ski trails north of Parry Sound on Highway 124, the Gravenhurst KOA or Bracebridge Resource Management Centre.

Arrowhead Provincial Park, north of Huntsville, offers a variety of activities, with cross-country skiing, snowshoe trails, a wonderful 1.3-kilometre ice-skating trail and a brand new visitors' centre.

Johnston's Cranberry Marsh near Bala offers another skating trail as well as pond hockey rinks and wagon rides.

Snowmobile trails are also in great shape across the region, but remember: No matter how wintry and cold it has been, ice can always be dangerous, so make sure that you know the local conditions.

For an indoor activity, don't forget to check out the Bobby Orr Hall of Fame in Parry Sound.

I hope everyone comes to visit Parry Sound–Muskoka this March break.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Jamie West: I want to share a story about a family in my riding of Sudbury: Julia, Sean, June, and Chaz.

June was diagnosed with severe autism spectrum disorder and developmental delay when she was two and a half years old. Her psychologist recommended that she receive a minimum of 20 hours of IBI therapy a week. June's treatment, in full, would cost approximately \$55,000 a year.

While on the wait-list, June began therapy privately. Her parents, Julia and Sean, worked 10 to 20 hours above their full-time hours just to cover the cost of this therapy, but they were still only able to afford about 10 hours a week. The family, as you can imagine, Speaker, is under significant financial and emotional stress.

With the government's introduction of income testing, their effort to provide for June is going to put them in a higher income bracket. That will mean they're going to receive less financial support. They still won't be able to provide June the 20 hours a week that she needs to reach her full potential. Honestly, Speaker, Julia and Sean would rather wait. They would rather wait for an equitable needs-based funding model, one that ensures that children receive the support they need instead of punishing families.

I have a responsibility, like we all do as MPPs, to bring stories like June's to the Legislature. Her family and many others across the province need the government to listen to their concerns. I will continue to stand with families and fight for solutions that will ensure that children like June receive the therapy that they need.

LIFE SCIENCES ONTARIO

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Last week, I had the opportunity to address Life Sciences Ontario's annual Celebration of Success gala. The event provided a wonderful opportunity for our life sciences sector to come together and recognize

individuals and companies that steer success right here in Ontario.

Ontario's life sciences sector plays a significant role in our economy, contributing more than \$50 billion to our GDP and \$2 billion in provincial tax. In my riding of Mississauga–Streetsville, also known as "Pill Hill," over 400 companies provide more than 15,000 well-paying jobs to the people of the GTA. Across the province, one in eight Ontarians is currently employed in a job connected to the sector.

Our government is making Ontario open for business and open for jobs. High-value innovation sectors such as the life sciences sector are providing these good jobs.

1510

But something I would like to talk about, which is exciting, that I am working on with Life Sciences Ontario and the Mississauga-based pharmaceutical company: I'm pleased to have in the House today Dr. Jason Field, president and CEO of LSO, and Charlini Nicholapillai, manager of public and government relations. Welcome. Dr. Jason Field, the LSO and the pharma industry are initiating a new scholarship program in 2019 that will aid young students aspiring to have careers in and contribute to the life sciences sector.

Mississauga represents a strong backbone to the sector now and into the future, providing great STEM students and access to good jobs. Thank you to you and your team for your hard work and dedication to the recognition and advancement of the sector and to the people of Ontario. Welcome to the Legislature.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Kevin Yarde: Over the last few weeks, I have had the chance to speak with the great residents of Brampton who are affected by the recent changes to the Ontario Autism Program. They shared their stories with me in my office, how this will negatively impact their children and their families.

One of my constituents, Sandra, has a son who is eight years old and has autism. He is currently in service, but after the proposed changes, he will have to be transitioned to a public school. Schools are not ready or adequately equipped to deal with the influx of children with special needs.

The grandson of another Bramptonian, Deborah, is on the severe end of the spectrum, and his parents will not be able to keep him at home after the proposed changes. She is worried about what the future holds for her grandson and herself as well.

These are just a few of the countless stories of families who will be left high and dry thanks to the proposed changes to the OAP. My constituents are very concerned with the situation. Schools are not ready for these children to be taken out of therapy. Schools do not have the resources to support these children, and parents are very concerned about this government's neglect for children with autism in this province.

These children and their families need and deserve better, and I hope this government will listen to the stories of these families and the service providers and make the necessary changes to ensure that no children are left behind.

LUNAR NEW YEAR

Mr. Billy Pang: As most of us are already aware, the Chinese, Tibetan, Vietnamese and Korean communities recently celebrated lunar new year on the 5th of February.

According to Chinese tradition, the lunar new year symbolizes prosperity and good fortune, and it's one of the most important days of the lunar calendar. It is the cause of the largest yearly migration of tourists, as people flock to celebrate this holiday with their loved ones. It is also a very old tradition, one that has been known to have been observed for thousands of years, and still continues to be. As we bid farewell to the Year of the Dog, we welcome the Year of the Pig. The significance of the pig is that it represents honesty, hard work and peace.

Mr. Speaker, I also had the honour and privilege to host a lunar new year event in my riding, along with the member of Parliament for Markham–Unionville, the honourable Bob Saroya. The event was well attended and included government officials from all levels, most notably our Premier, Mr. Doug Ford. An event like this, the lunar new year, should remind us of the importance of our prosperous cultural mosaic and the celebration of our diversity as a province.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Robin Martin: I recently received an email from a constituent of mine, Aaron. He was at a local hospital in the emergency room. He said, "I was somewhat appalled that there were large numbers of patients in the emergency room and many people standing because there were no seats ... I feel that there has to be a better way."

Aaron, I assure you there is a better way. Ontarians elected our government to put an end to hallway health care, and we've taken a major step forward by unveiling our plan for transformational change. The People's Health Care Act sets out our government's vision for patient-centred community care through the creation of Ontario health teams made up of local health service providers working as a coordinated group.

We will also ensure better and more connected services on the ground for patients, caregivers, and their families through the integration of multiple provincial agencies and specialized provincial programs into a single agency called Ontario Health.

Mr. Speaker, it will take time and hard work, but our government is committed to ending hallway health care and getting our health care system back on track.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 RELATIVE À LA DÉCLARATION DES NATIONS UNIES SUR LES DROITS DES PEUPLES AUTOCHTONES

Mr. Mamakwa moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 76, An Act to ensure that the laws of Ontario are in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples / *Projet de loi 76, Loi visant à assurer l'harmonie des lois de l'Ontario avec la Déclaration des Nations Unies sur les droits des peuples autochtones.*

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member care to explain his bill?

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Mr. Speaker. The act requires the government of Ontario to take all measures necessary to ensure that the laws of Ontario are consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This act will recognize the basic human rights and fundamental freedoms of Indigenous peoples in Ontario, and will affirm Ontario's commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

HELLENIC HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE HELLÉNIQUE

Ms. Triantafilopoulos moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 77, An Act to proclaim a month to celebrate Hellenic heritage in Ontario / *Projet de loi 77, Loi proclamant un mois pour célébrer le patrimoine hellénique en Ontario.*

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Could the member please give a brief explanation of her bill?

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: The bill would declare March every year to be Hellenic Heritage Month in Ontario. More than 270,000 people of Hellenic descent live in Canada today, and over half of them live in Ontario. Canadians of Hellenic descent have contributed to every field of life in Ontario, have enriched our culture and have strengthened our economy.

Hellenes, also known as Greeks, began to arrive in Canada in the early 19th century, with the vast majority coming after 1915. They have made many significant contributions

across many fields, including education, law, medicine, science, politics, business, sport and many others.

I look forward to being able to celebrate, with all members of the Legislature, the passage of this bill.

1520

SUPPORTING ONTARIO'S
COMMUNITY, RURAL
AND AGRICULTURAL
NEWSPAPERS ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 SUR LE SOUTIEN
AUX JOURNAUX COMMUNAUTAIRES,
RURAUX ET AGRICOLES DE L'ONTARIO

Ms. Ghamari moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 78, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to the publication of notices in newspapers / Projet de loi 78, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne la publication d'avis dans les journaux.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Could the member please give a brief explanation of her bill?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: The short form of this bill is the Supporting Ontario's Community, Rural and Agricultural Newspapers Act. This bill amends the City of Toronto Act, 2006, the Development Charges Act, 1997, the Environmental Assessment Act, the Expropriations Act, the Municipal Act, 2001, the Ontario Heritage Act and the Planning Act, where the act or the regulations made under it require that notices be published in a newspaper having general circulation in a municipality. The amendments allow the publication to be done in a newspaper that is published at regular intervals of a month or less rather than published at regular intervals of a week or less, as is currently the case.

ALGOMA UNIVERSITY
AMENDMENT ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR L'UNIVERSITÉ ALGOMA

Mr. Romano moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 79, An Act to amend the Algoma University Act, 2008 / Projet de loi 79, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2008 sur l'Université Algoma.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Could the member please briefly explain his bill?

Mr. Ross Romano: This bill will amend the Algoma University Act to reinstate the expanded power of this university to be able to grant degrees, which had been included in the prior act when it was enacted in 2008. The power, however, was never proclaimed into force and was

repealed pursuant to the Legislation Act. This is essentially to restart the clock. Algoma University is my alma mater, and I'm hoping to be able to have this bill passed so that we can make sure that Algoma University can continue to grant degrees on behalf of its students.

PETITIONS

CHILD CARE WORKERS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition 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. I'm going to give it to page Hidayah to bring up to the table. Thank you, page Hidayah.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

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

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

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

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

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

I support this petition and will affix my name to it. Let me also say: Go, Greyhounds, go.

PHARMACARE

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: This petition is entitled “Universal Pharmacare for All Ontarians.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas over 2.2 million Ontarians don’t have any prescription drug coverage and one in four Ontarians don’t take their medications as prescribed because they cannot afford the cost;

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

“Whereas Canada”—and Ontario—“urgently needs universal and comprehensive national pharmacare;

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

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

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Jamie West: I want to thank Barb Blasutti and Liana Holm, who collected these petitions on behalf of ETFO Rainbow Teacher Local.

“Support Ontario Families with Autism.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I support this petition. I’ll affix my signature and give it to page Julian.

MENTAL HEALTH
AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Kevin Yarde: I have a petition titled, “No More Waiting for Children and Youth Mental Health Care.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I fully endorse this petition. I will affix my name to it and give it to page Daniel.

1530

SERVICES FOR PERSONS
WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to thank Karen and Rick Balind, who have been relentless in gathering the signatures on this petition in support of their son, Dan, and other young adults who have developmental disabilities in Ontario. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas over 1,300 Ontarians and their families rely on independent facilitation, a service that helps those with developmental disabilities pursue work or school, live independently, enjoy hobbies and participate in their community;

“Whereas by cutting funding to independent facilitation, families will only be able to access this support through an inequitable fee-for-service model;

“Whereas the Ford government’s cuts to the independent facilitation program means fewer resources will now be available to people with developmental disabilities and their families;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the government to provide permanent funding for independent facilitation services and support to be offered province-wide so all Ontarians with developmental disabilities and their loved ones can access this important service without financial or geographical barriers.”

I wholeheartedly support and endorse this petition. I will affix my name and send it to the Clerks’ table via page Keya.

WEST LINCOLN MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I have the great privilege of—
Applause.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Wow. Thank you.

I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

“Whereas:

“—The West Lincoln Memorial Hospital has served West Niagara very well since it was first opened in 1948, but since then has become dated and in desperate need of upgrades and redevelopment to serve the growing health care needs of the region;

“—The former Liberal government called redevelopment of WLMH a priority, promising that construction would begin by 2009, and after subsequent broken promises, the government’s 2012 budget cancelled the project entirely; and

“Whereas:

“—Hamilton Health Sciences announced the temporary move of some important services from the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital;

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

“—Maintain all services in the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital;

“—Expedite the process of rebuilding the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital.”

Speaker, I know that our government is taking quick action on this important file. I am pleased to add my signature to this petition and give it to page Pyper, who will bring it to the table.

CHILD CARE WORKERS

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I’d like to thank the early childhood educators and child care workers in my riding of Parkdale–High Park for this petition.

“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. On the occasion of the upcoming International Women’s Day, I think this is something that the government should take action on.

CHILD CARE WORKERS

Mr. Jamie West: I want to present 157 signatures on a petition entitled “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 support this petition. I’ll affix my signature and give it to page Julian again.

CHILD ADVOCATE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas children and youth are Ontario’s most valuable resource and deserve the best start in life we can provide;

“Whereas Ontario’s most vulnerable children and youth are too often underserved by our child welfare, mental health, youth justice and special-needs sectors;

“Whereas that lack of service can result in health challenges, lower educational outcomes, reduced opportunity, injury and sometimes even death;

“Whereas children and youth, and in particular vulnerable children and youth, often have no voice and few adults to speak on their behalf;

“Whereas the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth is charged with the responsibility of providing an independent voice for children and youth by partnering with them to bring issues forward;

“Whereas the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth provides a necessary focused approach, putting children and youth at the centre of all their work, that cannot be provided by any other office;

“Whereas the closure of the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth represents a step backwards for Ontario that will harm our most vulnerable children and youth;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the ... Ford government to reverse

its decision to close the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.”

I fully agree. I'm going to sign this petition and give it to Daniel to bring up to the front.

INJURED WORKERS

Mr. Kevin Yarde: This petition is entitled “Workers’ Comp is a Right.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I totally agree with this petition. I will affix my name and give it to page Keya.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is entitled “Support Ontario Families with Autism.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

On behalf of the families in Parkdale–High Park, I’m proud to support this petition and will affix my signature to it.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE CLASSROOMS ACT, 2019

LOI DE 2019 POUR DES ÉCOLES SÛRES ET AXÉES SUR LE SOUTIEN

Mr. Clark moved third reading of the following bill:

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

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Debate?

Hon. Steve Clark: It’s a pleasure for me to lead off third reading debate. I want first, Speaker, to say that I’ll be sharing my time with the member for Niagara West and also Ontario’s Minister of Education. We’re here today to deal with Bill 48, third reading. I’m not going to speak very long, but what I do want to say is that I want to speak very quickly to the two members that I’ll be sharing my time with.

1540

First, to the member for Huron–Bruce, Ontario’s Minister of Education, the Honourable Lisa Thompson: Bill 48, if passed, would be her first bill that would receive royal assent since becoming an MPP. I can’t think of a nicer MPP in this Legislature. I toured a municipality in her riding, the municipality of Teeswater. I had a great Housing Supply Action Plan round table. But what really impressed me was the respect that Minister Thompson had with the community, with her local and municipal officials. It made me feel proud as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to have someone who really knows the pulse of her community, who knows full well what happens in Huron–Bruce and what would benefit those constituents. Speaker, I think I speak on behalf of the government in congratulating Minister Thompson on her work with Bill 48 and all of her efforts in the Legislature. Congratulations.

To my friend the member for Niagara West, who was elected on November 17, 2016: As someone who—Speaker, no humour in this—was young once myself and got involved in politics at a young age—

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: You still look young.

Hon. Steve Clark: Thanks, Sam. You look a lot younger than I do.

I want to say that I was so very impressed with the way that the member for Niagara West has represented his constituency. When I was in his constituency, along with the Minister of Government and Consumer Services—he and I went on our own time and canvassed with the member

during that election—it really was a breath of fresh air. I remember knocking on doors as a young candidate for mayor at the age of 22, but what I said to this member was that the difference between my campaign when I was 22 and his campaign when he was 19 was the fact that he knew what he was doing. He had an understanding of politics. He had worked for politicians. I literally had just graduated from university. I hadn't done any campaigning before. But he really impressed me that day that he had a very astute political knowledge. He showed it during his particular nomination, but he really showed it on the ground during that campaign. Right from the first day that he was in this Legislature, he has stood up for the good people of Niagara West.

I am so pleased that I'm able to share my time with two incredible members of the Legislative Assembly, two members who really know this education file and who can speak with far more experience than I can on Bill 48. So I will cede the floor to the member for Niagara West. Thank you, Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to move this bill.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Thank you, Speaker. It's an honour to be able to once again rise in this House, and I wish to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I wish to really acknowledge also his leadership that he has shown in this House and the ability that I have had to grow alongside him and to see how he has been such a mentor to so many people, not just in my by-election but also in this past election. Thank you for your leadership for the province.

Speaker, as he mentioned, we're all so very privileged to be able to serve alongside Minister Thompson. I have been privileged to stand beside her and see the leadership and the care and compassion she has for the students of Ontario and for the future of our great education system in this beautiful province. I want to thank her again for her leadership and for sharing her time with me this afternoon, of course, but really for her vision for what Ontario can be and what education in the province of Ontario can be, also, with Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act. Thank you, Minister Thompson, for all the work that you do.

It's an honour to once again be able to speak to the importance of Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, which was first introduced by our government in October of last year. I would also like to thank all the members of the opposition and our party who have participated in lively discussions over this proposed bill here in the chamber as well as in committee.

Speaker, as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, I'm proud to support this piece of proposed legislation for a number of reasons which I will explain this afternoon.

First, it is designed to protect students and children from any act of sexual abuse committed by a regulated educator as defined in the Ontario College of Teachers Act and Early Childhood Educators Act by requiring that those found guilty of such abuses by the discipline committees

of the colleges be subject to mandatory revocation of their certificates of registration. We will have zero tolerance for sexual abuse in the classroom.

Next, it is intended with this bill to move our students' math achievement in the right direction by better preparing new students and new teachers for fundamental math instruction.

Third, parents as well as the greater public will have a stronger voice when it comes to the governance of the teaching profession by allowing the government to respond to the governance review under way by the Ontario College of Teachers to better serve and protect the public interest in regulating Ontario's teaching profession.

Finally, Speaker, what I would like to focus my time on this afternoon for a great deal of my debate is the impacts that the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, if passed, would have on the lives of Ontario students with special education needs.

Before I dive more deeply into the topic of service animals, I want to highlight the support for this bill from the Ontario Student Trustees' Association—l'Association des élèves conseillers et conseillères de l'Ontario. OSTA—AECO is the largest student stakeholder group in Ontario, fighting for over two million students at a provincial level for the past 16 years. Their association of student trustees strives to empower students and works to improve public and Catholic education across Ontario.

In their written submission to the Standing Committee on Social Policy, OSTA—AECO president Amal Qayum wrote the following about Bill 48 on behalf of the students they represent:

"We recognize that, if passed, this bill would provide a plethora of benefits for education in the province by:

—"making the revocation of early child education certification mandatory for those found guilty of sexual abuse of a child;

—"providing the Minister of Education with the ability to instate policies and guidelines regarding service animals;

—"making the revocation of OCT teaching certification mandatory for those found guilty of sexual abuse of a child; and

—"requiring teachers to pass math examinations prior to obtaining teaching certification.

"We agree with the stances that the provincial government has taken in this bill and fully support its mission of fostering safe and supportive classrooms in Ontario. Regarding the topic of service animals, we encourage the government to create guidelines that school boards can follow and build more in-depth relevant policies in the future....

"OSTA—AECO thanks the provincial government for the opportunity to show support from students on this bill."

Shortly after announcing the introduction of Bill 48, two student trustees, Sean and Sophia, wrote the following in an article about the service animal piece. They said:

"OSTA—AECO believes that this proposed change creates better learning environments for students with exceptionalities. Service animals are an essential addition to a child's success in the classroom and a companion that

develops a long-term connection to the child and their individual needs. They aid students in developing their ability to focus on the task at hand and help students remain calm in crowds.”

Both Sean and Sophia have a brother with autism spectrum disorder. Sophia has experienced first-hand the positive effects that her brother’s service dog has had on his verbal and social communication skills.

Speaker, across the province, we know that many Ontarians benefit from the support of service animals in the classroom. Unfortunately, not all could, under the former Liberal regime.

I also especially now want to thank MPP Amy Fee, the MPP for Kitchener South–Hespeler, for being such a strong advocate for this issue. And again, I wish to thank the minister for taking strong action early in our mandate to ensure that these inequities are addressed.

Speaker, service dogs are known to perform many so-called invisible tasks that contribute to the cognitive functioning of students with autism. Families of children with autism report that having a service dog increases the social skills of their child and results in a reduction of tantrums and social discomfort. We heard testimony in our public hearing to this effect.

1550

Service dogs have been proven to:

- provide increased safety for the child;
- help control the child by commanding the dog;
- passively teach the child responsibility;
- lower aggression and frustration levels, leading to positive behavioural changes;
- provide comfort when a child is upset;
- add a degree of predictability to social settings for both the child and parents; and
- reduce social stress levels, allowing greater participation in education as well as social and leisure activities.

Speaker, you’ve heard me speak before about this in the case of Kenner Fee. Kenner’s story is just once instance, but he has come to represent the challenges of so many students across Ontario. Kenner’s service dog helps him to feel calm, to refrain from bolting, and to sleep. Medical professionals advised that Kenner needed a service dog in the classroom to assist with his disability, and yet he was not allowed to bring his service dog to school. The longer he went without his service dog, the worse Kenner’s anxiety became. This made learning and the school environment an unpleasant experience for Kenner.

I spoke with Kenner late last year when we were bringing forward this legislation, and he was so excited to see that the government was finally taking action so that other students like himself would be able to have this necessary support.

Safe learning environments are not only about grades and performance but also about a student’s overall well-being, and our government recognizes that.

The barriers that Kenner has faced have also been faced by many other students in Ontario. These families need to know how to address the needs of their children, and that is what this section of Bill 48 is meant to remedy.

Service animals may assist students with a range of physical and mental health needs, and the types of services provided by these animals are, in fact, diverse. These can include medical, therapeutic and emotional support services. However, there is currently no legislation in Ontario that explicitly addresses the use of service animals in schools, and the Ministry of Education does not currently provide direction to school boards related to the use of service animals in school. Why is that?

As it stands, it is up to each individual school board to develop their own processes for managing service animal requests. So why do only 39 school boards that we know of have specific policies in place to address service animals in schools? These policies vary from board to board, which means there’s limited consistency across the province in how these requests are treated. In fact, the minister and I have spoken with a family who had to move from one area to the next just to allow their child to go to a school that in fact does allow for a service animal.

Students and families have told us that this process for requesting the use of a service animal can be confusing and ultimately frustrating.

Let me be very clear: Our government for the people and the Ministry of Education are committed to ensuring that every student in Ontario has access to safe and supportive learning environments.

Families of students with special education needs have asked for a more clear and transparent process for requesting that service animals be able to accompany their children to school, no matter where they live. Our government for the people has been clear that we are committed to supporting parents and students, as well as teachers, in our education system. Every family in this province should feel supported when it comes to their child accessing a meaningful education. That is why we stood up in this House back in October, when we first introduced Bill 48.

So, again today, I wish to reiterate to the many families of this great province who are depending on clearer processes around the use of service animals in schools that we are finally taking action. We are working to ensure that the Minister of Education has the authority to establish policies and guidelines in respect to service animals in our schools. School boards would then be required to comply with these guidelines when creating their own locally informed policies. If passed, this bill would provide much-needed clarity for school boards that have turned to the Ministry of Education for guidance on this topic.

We want to continue to build on our early track record of being a government that listens to those it serves, a track record we also established with the largest consultation on education in Ontario’s history—an incredible 72,000 participants.

Interjections.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: That is worthy of applause, yes.

We heard loud and clear from our education sector partners that it is critically important that we consult with school boards, community agencies and service animal experts before we issue any direction to the sector with regard to this. These individuals and groups do deserve an

opportunity to be consulted in a meaningful way so that their voices are heard before any policy directive is provided to school boards. The input we receive through a formal consultation process will shape the direction that would be provided to school boards.

Speaker, we understand that there are important considerations to take into account moving forward. For example, considerations around allergies and religious or cultural concerns would also need to be addressed through this process to support students and staff. We want to get this right for all members of our school communities, and the people of Ontario can be confident that their input will be central in this process, should Bill 48 be passed.

We believe that when our school boards seek our guidance, we must work together with our education partners to provide them with the support they need to best serve their students and their school communities.

Speaker, since Minister Thompson and I were appointed to our roles last year, we have been working within our ministry very hard to ensure the changes we're making will have the greatest impact where it matters most, and that is on students, teachers, families and classroom learning environments. The work that has been done on the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act is an example of this commitment. And if passed, we will build on this commitment to create safe and supportive classrooms by ensuring students and families have access to more clear and transparent processes for requesting the use of a service animal in schools, and that educators and sector partners have the guidance they need to support these students and their families throughout this process. It's my hope that other members of this House will share the same commitment to students, families and educators, and that they will support this important piece of legislation for the benefit of our publicly funded education system.

To conclude my time, Speaker, I want to stress that Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, means that our government for the people is taking quick action to support students and families while strengthening our education system for future generations.

If passed, Bill 48 will help strengthen protections for students from possible sexual abuse.

It will help strengthen our students' math performance by ensuring new teachers have the fundamental skills they need to guide students toward success.

Finally, it will help strengthen the voice of parents and members of the general public when it comes to the way the teaching profession is governed in Ontario.

Speaker, as I've outlined here today, we are proposing to take meaningful and much-needed action to support students, families and school boards in dealing with requests for the use of service animals in schools. We are proposing to make policy with the goal that this process will be more clear, accessible and fair for all involved so that students with special education needs can access the supports they need to get the most out of their education.

Speaker, with Bill 48, we're once again delivering on our commitments to support students and families, and to support our teachers and educators by making our schools

safer and more supportive for everyone. Our government for the people and the Minister of Education believe that this is the right thing to do for our publicly funded education system, and it's my hope that my fellow members of this House agree.

I wish, once again, to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for leading off the debate on this important piece of legislation.

I wish to thank the Minister of Education for allowing me to participate in the leadoff to this debate.

With that, I wish to turn it over to the Minister of Education to hear her perspective on Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now I refer to the Minister of Education.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's my pleasure to join the debate today with regard to Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act.

It's interesting; I have to say that since July—well, I will be quite frank; since the afternoon of June 29, 2018, I have started working with so many amazing people who are leading with their heart in terms of making sure that we get Ontario education back on track. The parliamentary assistant that I have the pleasure of working with at the Ministry of Education is one of those people who does just that, and I thank him for all he does.

1600

With that said, though, I have to tell you that I have just been so pleased with the support that the Premier of Ontario, Premier Ford, as well as the caucus, has given to this very important bill. As the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing mentioned earlier at the start of this debate, this is my very first piece of legislation, if passed, that will get through and actually become law.

Just a heads-up for those of you watching today: I've had the honour of serving the amazing riding of Huron-Bruce for almost eight years now, and you can't take passing legislation into law for granted. It's something that's very special. It's something that requires a lot of thought and a lot of research. I'm so, so happy to share this advancement of Bill 48 with everyone in the caucus, so thank you so much for being here today.

I think it's really important that, again, we underscore the fact that, if passed, the government of Ontario will finally be in a position to ensure safe and supportive classrooms throughout Ontario.

It's interesting, because as we debate and we go back and forth during question period, people tend to say a lot of things. I remember very distinctly one day when we were in question period and it was suggested by a member opposite that Bill 48 was actually just an extension of a Liberal initiative. To that, Speaker, I want to clear the air right now: Bill 48 is mine. Bill 48 is something that we've worked on collectively, the parliamentary assistant and I, with the support of the PC caucus. I share it with all of them.

I can't stress enough that at a time when students needed a government to stand up for them, to ensure a safe classroom environment, the former Liberal administration failed them, and I think that's absolutely shameful. The

former Minister of Education was reported to have not gone far enough with their initiative to ensure a safe and supportive classroom.

Unfortunately, then, in my particular riding of Huron–Bruce, we saw a person of influence, a teacher, who for whatever reason found he needed to use his influence, use his position, and unfortunately he was found guilty of assaulting and influencing young people—not once, but twice. I can't even believe it, Speaker, and that was the driving force behind and the premise on which I stand today in front of you debating this bill. It behooves every single one of us in this House, all 124 elected members of provincial Parliament, to stand up and tell students we've got their backs, and we want to make sure that we've got the right legislation in place to do just that.

Bill 48 is going to do so much more, Speaker. Bill 48 is also going to ensure greater student achievement. We're working hard to make sure that our public education system is a constant and dynamic source of opportunity as well as advancement for our young people. We need to engage them. They need to be excited about going to school every day, because the fact of the matter is that the world in which we live is both changing and challenging, and we need to get it right.

We need to make sure that parents across this amazing province of Ontario know that it is my number one priority to ensure that each and every student will have access to a meaningful education—an education that will help students reach their future goals, and an education that will enable our students to find secure jobs into the future. This means that, regardless of where students live or which school they attend, they have access to the best classrooms, the best teachers and resources that make Ontario a world leader in education. Be it in Kingsville, Toronto, Cornwall, Kenora, Ambleside, Windsor, Teeswater, Mildmay or Chatham-Kent, quality and access to educational supports should be equal.

We also need to make sure that we are engaging Ontario's youth and creating the right climate in which they feel safe to learn and to grow. We need to make sure that they are being equipped so that they can learn to be resilient, they can feel confident in their skills and they are set up to succeed in the future in whatever path they choose.

It stands to reason, Speaker, that it all starts with students feeling safe. Our government is committed to all students—and teachers, for that matter—in ensuring safe and supportive classrooms throughout Ontario. The proposed amendments to the Ontario College of Teachers Act and the Early Childhood Educators Act under our proposed legislation make it clear our government has zero tolerance for sexual abuse of students and children. If passed, the proposed amendments to the Ontario College of Teachers Act and the Early Childhood Educators Act would ensure that educators who are found guilty by the discipline committee of the Ontario College of Teachers or the discipline committee of the College of Early Childhood Educators of any act of sexual abuse will lose their licence, full stop. There is no mulligan in this, Speaker. Unlike the other, Liberal administration that seemed to go

a little easy and make parents uneasy, under Premier Ford and under the PC government of Ontario, their licence will be revoked, full stop. Currently, mandatory revocation is only used for a list of specified acts. More stringent provisions are being proposed to fix where the Liberals left off due to the unique nature of the professions of teachers and early childhood educators; namely, that such educators are in a position of trust and authority and work with a vulnerable segment of society. I've touched on that earlier.

In addition, if the proposed amendments are passed, educators found guilty by the colleges' discipline committees of a prescribed sexual act that is prohibited under the federal Criminal Code would also be subject to mandatory revocation of their certificates of registration. Again, we will have zero tolerance for these crimes. Teachers who commit these crimes will lose their licence immediately, once found guilty.

Speaker, allow me to clarify one more important fact. We acknowledge that educators may need to speak about physical health, and these types of conversations can come up in the classroom. These conversations may include speaking about sex in ways that are pedagogically appropriate, and we have written provisions into the bill that make it clear that these conversations will not put a teacher at risk. Moreover, we also acknowledge that educators may assist children and students with their care and hygiene as may be necessary in their duties. To this end, the proposed amendments to the Ontario College of Teachers Act, the Early Childhood Educators Act and the Teaching Profession Act would clarify that sexual abuse of a student or child does not include touching or behaviours that are necessary in terms of dealing with professional responsibilities. That includes acts that are necessary for the purposes of diapering, toileting, washing or dressing, as well as remarks that are pedagogically appropriate.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, I want to remind everyone here today that the health, safety and well-being of children and students is our number one priority. I can't stress that enough. Our government has zero tolerance for sexual abuse of Ontario students and children, and our government is taking action now to make our schools and early years and child care settings safer. That's one of the many reasons why Bill 48 is so important, and I hope everyone can stand behind supporting this bill at third reading.

You know, we've heard from many stakeholders, and that begs the point: I have to give a special recognition and thank you to the people who represented the PC government of Ontario so amazingly, incredibly well during committee. We had a committee that was stellar, headed up by our PA, Sam Oosterhoff, and I have to thank the committee so much for the time and effort that they put in in making sure that stakeholders felt valued and that the dialogue that they shared with the members of our party would make a difference.

Over and above that, there's also the team behind all of us here in the House. I want to give a shout-out to Ben

Menka and our ministry team for assisting them during the committee process as well.

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During committee, we heard from stakeholders. The College of Early Childhood Educators spoke before our committee and supported the proposed changes. In their written submission, they wrote, “The college is firmly of the position that there is no situation in which a professional in a position of trust should retain their membership and their professional designation after having been found guilty of any sexual touching, behaviour, or remarks of a sexual nature towards a child.” Our government had wide stakeholder support to make this change, and we are proud of our work that will ensure that teachers who endanger the province’s children will lose their licence.

Another important piece of this bill is supporting students. The world is changing rapidly. If Ontario does not adapt to this new reality, we will be left behind other jurisdictions, and we may never catch up, so we’ve got to take action. We, as a government, have only one choice—one course of action—and that is to move forward and find innovative ways to succeed. That success begins with our teachers, so before I continue, Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge our teachers for their commitment and their passion and their dedication to Ontario’s students. I thank them for all of the work they do, day in and day out, in the classroom.

For those of you who maybe haven’t heard this before, I actually have four teachers in my immediate family. Needless to say, I get a lot of coaching, and I get a lot of ideas in terms of how we can enhance the learning environment in the classroom. Quite frankly, I value their opinion. That is something that I’ve brought forward in this role as Minister of Education. We value the input from stakeholders and parents and teachers as well as students. Ontario has some of the best teachers and education workers in the world. I want to thank all of Ontario’s educators for the important work that they do, as I said, to support our students each and every day.

I want to reinforce the government’s commitment to working alongside our educators. The proposed Bill 48 would support teachers to become better prepared to teach the fundamentals of math. By making math content knowledge tests a requirement for certification with the Ontario College of Teachers, we can help ensure that all new teachers entering classrooms have a strong foundation in math. That strong math foundation will give teachers confidence in the classrooms when they teach our province’s children.

We want people who actually enjoy math to be in front of the class demonstrating to children that math is an important skill and fundamental basic need. Our proposed changes will help to put teachers in the best position possible for success, before they enter the classroom, in this regard. In fact, the changes we are proposing can provide parents the confidence they deserve, knowing that their government is working to help to ensure that Ontario teachers have the foundational skills, as I mentioned, most importantly, to teach math. Upon the passage of the bill,

our government looks forward to developing the test and working with stakeholders to ensure that teachers entering the profession will be equipped to set our children up for success.

Since our government took office, we have been working on finding ways to get our publicly funded education system back on track and back into the hands of those it impacts the most: our students and, quite frankly, their parents. We have made some big moves that will strengthen our publicly funded education system. Bill 48 is another example of this. The Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act, if passed, will not only help to ensure that students and children are learning in a safe space, but in the immediate future will also help to make certain—no doubt about it—that we have one of the best education and early years and child care systems in the world for years to come. The Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act will help to support every student in Ontario, including students with special education needs, in accessing meaningful education.

Also, since the day we took office, our government has been focused on ensuring that our education system accomplishes two significant goals: respecting parents and preparing their children for their future. We kept a promise, Speaker. You know what our Premier always says: Promise made—

Interjections: —promise kept.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Very good.

In this case, we promised to get back to the basics, and we’re doing just that. We all recognize that there is more work to improve student performance in mathematics. Our position, and that of parents, educators, business leaders and more, is that math matters. How can anyone argue that a strong background in mathematics would not open up more doors for students down the road? In fact, math is a basic skill in most occupations. Therefore, these math skills are very important to our young people’s future and job success, and that’s why, Speaker, we need to make sure that we’re giving students, as well as those teaching them, the support they need.

Since the day we took office, our government has been focused on ensuring that our education system, as I said, respects parents and ensures children have a bright future. But we also want to demonstrate that we stand with teachers in making sure they have the best skills possible to make a difference in the life of each and every student they connect with. Sadly, under the previous Liberal administration that whole concept seemingly got lost, because if you take a look at previous EQAO results, under the Liberal administration only half of Ontario grade 6 students met provincial math standards. This is unacceptable. Ask a parent whose child has just failed the latest EQAO testing how they feel about that. Conversely, ask a child who is floundering in math how they feel about that very same situation.

I’ve been asked, when it comes to math, why are we—meaning the collective PC government—so sure that math scores are low because teachers do not have the knowledge? Well, Speaker, I can tell you that we’ve seen evidence and we’ve heard evidence and testimony that if

teachers are not confident in the fundamentals, no matter what they are teaching, let alone math, they're sometimes hesitant to teach. This is especially the case when it does come to mathematics.

So the change we're proposing is very, very important. Research shows that over the next four years, 70% of job opportunities will place significant importance on math and numeracy skills. How often do we hear people lamenting that they go and purchase something at a local store and a young teenager is at the till, and if that till is not working properly and they actually have to count back the change in the old-fashioned way, they can't? That's unfortunate.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's a fake story.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Actually, we do hear that, time and time again.

So the ability to factor quantitative and spatial information in your decision-making—you know what?—we have to make sure that is addressed so students can succeed and have confidence in their career pathways.

Mr. Speaker, we know our teachers are among some of the very best in the world. Our teachers and education workers work incredibly hard, each and every day, to create a learning experience that will enable students to be the next generation of successful citizens in every community across this province. Our government is going to continue on with some very important work. We have to do this. We have to get it right. We're going to continue to develop supports and resources that will help students remain at the front of the field.

In August of last year, we released a teachers' guide and a parents' fact sheet that emphasized fundamental math concepts and skills that students are expected to know in each grade in order to meet current curriculum expectations. The ministry is also allocating funding for the 2018-19 school year to school boards to focus on the fundamentals of math and mandating additional training for teachers to specifically focus on fundamental math concepts and skills.

Another important concept that we're addressing in Bill 48 is governance. Currently, the Ontario College of Teachers governance model includes 23 members of the college who are elected by their peers and 14 members of the public appointed by the government of Ontario. There has been public criticism of the college that the public interest is not being well served and that there is an inherent conflict of interest when teachers have the majority vote on the council of the college.

Our proposed statutory amendments would help the government respond to the governance review under way by the Ontario College of Teachers. Again, even the College of Teachers is undertaking its own review to address this very situation.

Another change, Speaker, that we are making is that we're dissolving the public interest committee under the Ontario College of Teachers Act. It's sad to say that under the Liberal administration there was a very, very poor accountability factor. This committee, the public interest committee under the Ontario College of Teachers Act, has

not met since January 2017. That's over two years, Speaker—unacceptable. In addition, under the Education Act, the minister's public interest committees are still available as an option to the education minister for advice on matters of public interest, but we are dissolving a committee that has not met for over two years.

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Our government has demonstrated that we will seek the input of the public every step of the way in terms of our decision-making. We do this because it is our priority that Ontario's publicly funded schools, early years and child care settings are safe, inclusive and welcoming places that are going to guarantee success for our young people in Ontario.

Now, more than ever, it's important for students throughout this amazing province to graduate with the skills and knowledge they need to be successful in work, school and beyond. We have heard this loud and clear from parents, employers and students themselves. Students are even telling us that they do not have the skills they need to go out and feel confident in securing a job.

I'd be remiss if I didn't reflect upon an education round table that we had in conjunction with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce in Niagara a few months ago. I had a table full of employers, and one employer, in particular, said, "We need to do something to support our students so that they're resilient and they have more confidence." He said that recent graduates that he was conducting performance reviews for were absolutely beside themselves. He spoke of two in particular. One was in tears before the performance review ever began. Interestingly enough, that person was a really hard worker, but they had never gone into a situation whereby they had to receive constructive feedback in order to improve and move forward. Isn't that sad? Isn't that just too bad, that that poor person did not have the confidence or the resiliency to enter into a really beneficial process in terms of a job review?

A second person this individual talked about was so anxious about going into their very first performance review, that they attended that review with a parent. This is 2019, and a young person, graduating from university, entering their first performance review for the first job they ever had, entered that review with a parent. How this past Liberal government has failed our students over and over and over again is being proven in the workforce today as young people go out and seek a job.

But I can tell you, Speaker, with absolute confidence, that a new day has dawned in Ontario, because the Ontario government is absolutely committed to making sure we have our very best teachers feeling confident in what they're teaching so that our young people can gain the skills they need, the knowledge from which they will build a career path that will be successful; and the students, based on the type of education they are receiving in Ontario, will be confident and resilient, because we are making some changes that I can't wait for the public to learn about when it comes to coping and resiliency. Our Ontario students need it, and it's the Ontario PC government that's going to deliver it for them.

Interjections.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you.

That just happens to be my segue, Speaker, into talking about something that's very near and dear to my heart. I am all about facilitation, and I'm all about hearing from the people who matter. And because of that, I am very pleased to say that last fall, we conducted the largest education consultation ever in the history of Ontario, and the data, the information and the willingness of individuals to share their stories absolutely will inform education for years to come: 72,000 parents, students, educators, EAs—the list goes on and on. Grandparents and concerned members of the community had their say on a whole host of topics. Throughout this process, we received extensive feedback on subjects like job and life skills, health and physical education, the legalization of cannabis, and how to improve student performance in STEM subjects—science, technology, engineering and math. We also learned about what measures can be taken to improve standardized testing and what steps schools should take to manage technology, such as cellphones in the classroom.

Speaker, I am pleased to tell you that with the unprecedented response that we facilitated, the submissions, as I said before, will help inform the ministry's future policy and programming decisions for decades. What matters most is that it's coming from the people that matter. We weren't pretending to know all. We were absolutely putting our hand on heart, saying, "We need to hear from the people who are in the classroom every day, and we need to hear from the parents who see the results of the action in the classroom." We're absolutely committed to ensuring that we have the best learning environment in any jurisdiction in Canada and around the world.

We have also been consulting with our education partners to improve Ontario's system from kindergarten to grade 12, and working to ensure we are modernizing the way we fund education in a responsible and business-like manner to ensure that tax dollars are having the greatest impact in the classroom. We are considering their feedback as we seek out innovative ideas that will help our government's efforts to get this province back on track.

I have to say, Speaker, I want to thank all of the education partners, our francophone education partners, and every single parent group and education partner that not only participated in this consultation, but they also have been so forthcoming when I've been out meeting with them. They welcome us. They know we're committed to getting education back on track in Ontario, and they want to be at the table. For that, I say thank you.

All of the feedback we've been receiving has actually culminated in an amazing initiative that will see teachers supported in the classroom, students succeed in the classroom because teachers are being supported, and parents satisfied with the education their children are finally going to be receiving in classrooms across every single school in this province. We're listening and we're making sure we get it right, once and for all. We need to make sure that we're engaging youth and creating the right climate in which they feel safe and, ultimately, realize their dreams.

We're going to see more and more opportunities for young people to participate and drive our economy forward like never before. We're going to focus on things like improving Ontario's math strategy, and ensuring teachers have all the tools they need to do their jobs. We're going to modernize the way we fund education so that it is meeting the needs and priorities of students in today's world while ensuring respect for Ontario's taxpayer. And by focusing on the fundamentals, Speaker, Ontario will once again be a leader in math education. Together with our partners, we have this wonderful opportunity ahead of us to help prepare students to be good citizens, embrace core values and, most importantly, be ready for a good-paying job.

As the changes that we are proposing as part of Bill 48 will provide, we will see parents will be assured, and that the government is committed to making Ontario a world leader in education once again. We're going to be open for learning, Speaker. How do you like that? Open for business, open for learning, so ultimately we're open for jobs.

This legislation would help make sure students are prepared for a changing global economy. These proposed amendments would also make our children and students are learning, most importantly, in a welcoming environment that is safe. We're focused on improving, as I said, the math strategy and that teachers have the tools they need.

It's exciting, Speaker. This is an exciting time in education. We invite all education partners to continue this path with us. We're going to be transforming education in Ontario because parents, students, teachers and concerned citizens across this province proved that they want change. We need to catch education up with the times so that our students are learning the fundamentals to be prepared to take on any challenge that lies ahead of them. And we're going to pave a way for young people to have every opportunity to be players in the economy.

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We want children to be aware of the amazing jobs that are available to them close to home and, possibly, across the province or around the world, because we are indeed in a global economy. You can work from Teeswater, Ontario, and have a globally based company succeed, and that is because we are going to ensure that, again, it doesn't matter whether it's in Ottawa; Kenora, as I said before; I'll throw in Chatham-Kent one more time, just because I know it's special to you, Speaker; or any other community in this province where—

Interjections.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Stratford, oh, and Windsor again—yes, we can't forget Windsor.

Interjections.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thunder Bay, yes; and as I look across the way, Brampton.

The fact of the matter is, we have to get it right, and we need to make sure that the opportunities are standardized, to a degree. We listened to the Auditor General this past December, and she was absolutely appalled at the fact that there was technology—whiteboards and computers—still in packages in schools across this province. Meanwhile, a student asked me, not too long ago, why a textbook he was

forced to use was actually older than his parent. The inequity from board to board to board has been stunning.

So we, in the PC government of Ontario, recognize that this is not fair, and we recognize that through perhaps EQAO and the leadership that we now have there, we will have an opportunity to right the wrong here. We're going to have to make sure, under this government, that there's accountability. Taxpayer dollars are too precious these days. We need to make sure that if we're investing in technology, it darn well needs to be used in that classroom. And I heard from teachers that, in part, they also need to make sure they've got the support to make sure they're not only trained on that technology, but that they can maintain that technology as well.

We have had such a host of incredible consultations and two-way dialogue with our education stakeholders that we will prove that we've listened to, and that the differences that are being made are a direct result of people trusting this government to get it right. For that, I want to thank everyone, again, that participated in not only our consultation, but in all of our meetings that we have had since we've taken office in June of last year.

A big thing that is really loud and clear as well, Speaker—in terms of preparing students to be not only aware of jobs in their own backyard, but to be able to be in a position to compete—is the need not only to talk about and make sure we get it right in math, but we need to make sure that we embrace the rest of the STEM subjects as well: science, technology, engineering, but also financial literacy.

We heard it loud and clear. The Minister of Finance and I met with a junior economy club in Toronto a couple of months ago, and these kids were really astute. They said they would have liked to have learned in high school why it's important to save. They said they would have liked to have learned in high school that you need to respect a credit card and that you need to understand what accruing interest on a balance, on a credit card, could do to somebody's credit rating.

They also suggested that—and I was just amazed at this—there was food literacy that needed to be taught, because too many kids waste their money. How many kids these days like those really expensive coffees? You know? The fact of the matter is, that money that they spend on a coffee a couple of times a day could go a long way if they knew how to buy produce and make it stretch over the course of the week. So it was interesting to actually hear that coming not only from students, but then on teleconferences that message came through loud and clear as well.

Kids want to be successful, and it's our responsibility to make sure that they have skills so that they can be ready to contribute to the economy and that they can get the jobs that are great—in the communities close to home, as I said, or across this province. We need to focus once again on skilled trades. Too many students have told us, and too many parents have told us, that they are frustrated because, in rural Ontario in particular, our greatest export is our youth, because they think they all have to go to an urban centre to get a job. Meanwhile, there are so many amazing

six-figure jobs in the trades. We need to encourage kids to have a wonderful quality of life in rural Ontario as well as urban Ontario, and that starts with understanding the education they need to absolutely qualify for the jobs that are around them. I know some folks that have had to go abroad to pursue their career dreams. But a very important thing for anybody watching this debate right now is to know that Ontario is going to be open for business, and in doing so, we're going to be open for jobs. And for our younger citizens of this province, we're going to be open for learning as well, because we've got to get it right and make sure that our focus is their success, and that success is based on making sure we get it right in the classroom.

I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the valuable contribution of education workers and teachers in the overall success of education throughout this province. I've said it over and over again, Speaker, and I'll say it again: We have some of the best teachers in the world right here, right now. But jurisdictions are starting to nip at our heels when it comes to mathematics. Jurisdictions are actually poised to surpass us when it comes to computer skills and technology. It's time for us to pull up our socks. We owe it to our students, the next generation, to get education right in this province. In saying that, I look forward to working with our many partners in education to achieve these goals and create the many wonderful opportunities for young people to participate and drive our economy forward like never before, and to ensure that teachers have all the tools they need to do their jobs.

I also want to put a little footnote here. I want to make sure that teachers know that we are also focused on making sure that their learning environment, their teaching environment, is equally as important as the students'.

I want to close by restating my number one priority: to ensure that each and every student in Ontario will have access to a meaningful education. Regardless of where they live or what school they attend, students will have the best access to classrooms, teachers and resources. Ultimately, if we succeed in teaching our students what they need to know for today and the jobs of tomorrow, they will take on a big role in helping to bring Ontario back into a position of being a world leader once again.

I'm pleased to say that my parliamentary assistant, Sam Oosterhoff, has worked equally hard on Bill 48. He outlined some of the things he has been primarily involved in. The companion dogs have been a very, very important piece and another example of the inequity across Ontario from board to board to board. But this government is getting it right in Bill 48, and we've already seen some results. Just a week ago, I heard that, as a result of what we're doing in Bill 48, a nine-year-old boy was able to go to school for the very first time with his companion dog. So it's already starting. We haven't even concluded the third reading debate on Bill 48, but we're having an impact not only with regard to ensuring a supportive classroom for all students, but making sure that it is safe as well.

As I said earlier on in my comments, I sat and shook my head one day when it was suggested by a member of

the opposition party that, oh, Bill 48 was a Liberal initiative. Well, Mr. Speaker, no, it isn't. Bill 48 is a home-grown initiative by the Ontario PC government, because we listened. We listened to teachers, we listened to parents and we listened to students with regard to safe and supportive environments in the classroom. Once and for all, we're actually cleaning up the mess that the Liberal government had employed. The fact of the matter is that we're going to get it right. You know what? The previous government spun its wheels for 15 years, but in eight short months we've introduced a bill that is demonstrating how committed we are. If this should pass, all students in Ontario should feel good, because their parents are going to have confidence in them, that every day they go to school, they're going to be learning the fundamentals that will enable them to be the best they can be and be confident in their career path that lies ahead of them. That's what this government is committed to.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: An hour ago, we kicked off this debate with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing reflecting on his first mayoral campaign back in the early 1980s. As a former reporter, I remember this kid with the big afro running for mayor of Brockville. Times have changed a little bit, but he went on to have a stellar career in municipal politics, municipal administration.

He was reflecting on the member for Niagara West: the youngest mayor talking about the youngest MPP ever elected, at 19, Mr. Oosterhoff. I remember that by-election, Speaker, as I'm sure you do as well. Young Sam was dead-set opposed to the then-new sex ed curriculum, and the young member—never been in a public school; always been home-schooled—is now the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education. But having said that, I have great respect for the member from Niagara West. I think he's got a bright career either here or in Ottawa, wherever he decides to end up.

Then we moved on to the Minister of Education. The Minister of Education talked about her first piece of legislation coming, the Safe and Supportive Schools Act. I don't know that it's going to be all that safe and supportive for the LGBTQ2 students, or to the teachers who have to wear Kevlar to school because of the abuse that they're taking in the classrooms. I don't know that it's going to be safe and supportive once we see the class sizes adjusted under this government as well.

The minister said they're going to be open. I just hope that they're open to input to improve this bill, because it has many flaws. I really agree with her, though, when she said that the Liberals have screwed up education in this province. I'm 100% behind her on that one.

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

Mr. David Piccini: I'd like to thank the Minister of Education and her parliamentary assistant for the remarkable work they've done on this file, for listening to our

teachers, for listening to our parents and educators. I think it's so important.

I'd just like to highlight two things: the largest consultation in Ontario's history—72,000 Ontarians consulted—in the drafting of our education legislation. Of course, in my riding, two things come out on math. I know the members opposite, on the financial literacy piece—I thank the minister for her swift action on financial literacy. Least of most, it's needed so that future NDPers can fix the \$3-billion hole in their platform. I think it's so needed, and that couldn't be any better highlighted than that hole in their platform, the need for financial literacy in this system.

Secondly, an area really important and close to my heart is on service dogs and ensuring that the support is done in a fair and transparent manner. Of course, 39 of 72 school boards have a plan; that leaves a lot of holes for many families in need, so I'd like to thank the minister for listening to those families. I met with a number of them from my constituency who came in. Thank you, Minister, for listening to them. We need a fair and open and transparent process on that. That's what this legislation accomplishes, so thank you for listening to that. I look forward to working with the minister and her parliamentary assistant.

Of course, we had five great consultations in Northumberland—Peterborough South, from all corners of our riding and rural Ontario. We submitted that feedback—72,000 pieces of feedback—and I look forward to our continued work on this file.

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

Mr. Jamie West: I want to congratulate the minister on her bill. I also want to thank the member from Niagara West and, as well, the member from Northumberland—Peterborough South for their comments. Lots was discussed today, but the fundamental math skills they need—the member from Northumberland—Peterborough South talked about the importance of New Democrats needing math. It stands out to me, because recently I was at STEM for girls and women. The importance of having people get into science and technology, engineering and math—and I like to include arts, so I say "STEAM" a lot, because I think it's important. But math is so important that we keep talking about it.

One of the things that I think is interesting is the new EQAO testing—not the new testing. But we appointed a new full-time chair. I think this is important math that we can all agree on: Previously, we used to run this for about 5,000 bucks. We had a part-time person—5,000 bucks. Recently, we decided that what we would do is appoint Cameron Montgomery. He was someone who was attempting to be elected as an MPP, like us around here. He wasn't successful, but luckily, he landed on his feet. My goodness, a \$140,000-a-year job—that's wonderful. But if I do the math—the \$140,000 and the \$5,000—it's \$135,000 more that we're paying for the same services. That's bad math.

They also talked about the budget. I think the budget is important because this is a government that froze the minimum wage at \$14 an hour. So \$14 times 40 hours times

52 weeks is \$29,000 a year. That guy is going to make \$100,000 more than all of the people that you froze wages for. That's math that's important.

I think we've got to really, really focus on math. I think students are going to really appreciate this and understand the math that Conservatives believe in compared to the math that we believe in, where we take care of everybody and we make sure of fair wages for everybody.

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

Mrs. Nina Tangri: This afternoon, we're speaking to Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act.

I believe that all parties of this House agree that any time a teacher's professional responsibilities are misused, such as a teacher committing a sexual act to a student, disciplinary action should be taken. Having service animals to support students in the classroom can only allow a student to remain calm and even excel. School boards needed to have this clarity on how a service animal can seamlessly become part of a student's progress and be included in the classroom.

I can't say it enough, but mathematics is so significant and important today and in the future. Only if our teachers have the ability to teach math well, then our students will excel. As a parent, I feel confident that all of our children in Ontario will be ready to compete globally with the skills they need.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would really like to thank all of those who participated in the consultations: parents, teachers and students. And an absolutely huge thank you to Minister Thompson and parliamentary assistant Oosterhoff for their tireless work, day and night, on Bill 48.

I completely and totally urge all members of this House to support this bill. Let's prepare our students for the great future ahead.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now I return to the Minister of Education for her final comments.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I just want to start off my final comments by saying thank you to the entire PC caucus. You guys are amazing. It's such a wonderful team that we can come together and have constructive conversations.

Interjection.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Yes, Speaker, I'm looking at you.

We have constructive conversations, but do you know what? At the end of the day, we land on a place of consistency. We land on a place that's sincere when it comes to making sure there's equity in having safe and supportive classrooms across this province. We're going to work together and make sure that this just blossoms and Ontario education again becomes a world leader once more.

To the member from Windsor West: I was hoping I was going to get a poem, because you are our local poet laureate. I appreciate what you say, but the fact of the matter is, we're getting it right. We've listened to education stakeholders, parents, teachers and students alike. When you talk about the importance of getting it right, let me tell you, when it comes to safety, my sister, a teacher,

had to take a knife off a kid in her classroom. We owe it to teachers who face that new reality to make sure that we get it right, because she's not the only one in this province. So I assure you that we will not stop until we get that supportive classroom right.

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To the member from Sudbury: Ask me some day in question period about Dr. Cameron Montgomery. He taught for the faculty of education at the University of Ottawa for 17 years, and the fact of the matter is, he talked about the previous committee. All I can say is—and you know who the former chair was—you get what you pay for.

Speaker, I can tell you that the new chair of EQAO is going to take standardization to new heights.

Interjections.

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

Before we move on to our next member in the debate, 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. Sabawy assumes ballot item number 77 and Ms. Khanjin assumes ballot item number 101.

Further debate.

Ms. Doly Begum: I'd like to take a moment to welcome my brother, Mohashen Miah, and my mom, Joba Begum, and my aunt Ms. Jannatal Ferdous to the House today. Thank you so much for being with me today. You keep me going, and you're my rock. I'm honoured to have you in this House today.

Speaker, I will be doing my maiden speech, as well as speaking to Bill 48 and sharing my time with the member from Windsor West.

I rise today in this beautiful House with much gratitude and humility. Although I've spoken in this House before on many matters, the opportunity to speak about the beauty of my riding, the courage and the sacrifices of our parents and the hope of our children fills me with great gratitude and pride.

I'm honoured to represent the hard-working people of Scarborough Southwest, the place I call my home, and the home to many families, friends, immigrants, second- and third-generation Canadians as well as the many First Nations people. I thank all of you for placing your trust in me.

Scarborough is situated in the traditional territory of many nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinaabe, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples, and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. It is also covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

The stretch of one of the most admired beauties of Canada, known as the bluffs, lies in my riding of Scarborough Southwest.

The rich history of our auto industry remains in the rusty yet lively local auto shops on our streets. While General Motors may have closed their Eglinton plant, the

legacy of those good manufacturing jobs for hard-working people has left a lasting imprint on the character of my riding. It also left people with a healthy distrust of those who promised the world but would rip away the livelihood of a community to make a quick profit.

The unforgettable legacy of Canada's bomb girls' courage and bravery during the Second World War is remembered in the remarkable mural under the bridge at St. Clair and Warden.

This is where I grew up; where I went to school; where some of the most brilliant young minds thrive in some of the best schools, despite the underfunding of our education system that caused the walls of those schools to crumble; where children fight for survival while living in poverty and go to school with an empty stomach because of continuous corporate greed and politics of self interest; where long wait-lists of affordable housing only grow longer and the pile of repairs in Toronto Community Housing only gets bigger; where we have three subway stations and yet our hard-working men and women are forced to wait in the cold to get on the next bus to get to their children after a long day of work.

It is also a place where community leaders shape and remake our neighbourhoods to combat poverty and bring change, like opening the newest youth shelter, giving hope for a better tomorrow.

We also have an amazing example of what works for affordable housing. It is called co-op housing. You will find the true meaning of community in the long-lasting relationships of neighbours in our co-ops. The dream of becoming homeowners may seem far away, but it doesn't stop our young families from dreaming of owning their own home one day. We dream of an affordable life with our families, a bright future for our children. I know I sound romantic. What can I say? It's a bittersweet feeling. Being the first woman MPP in the boundary of Scarborough Southwest and being the first Bangladeshi Canadian ever elected in this country, it's hard not to be romantic about it.

I remember the first day I walked into the Legislature as an elected member, looking up at the large portraits and then noticing my own reflection in the glass, seeing a brown girl, wondering if she belonged here in this House. The 11-year-old me, who immigrated to Canada, would have thought it unlikely for her to have a seat in this Legislature.

You see, my father was an immigrant who left his homeland in search of a job before I was born. He was the son of a farmer from a small village in Bangladesh, where a season can dictate how much food is served on the table. Like many of the immigrants here, to support his family, he travelled across oceans to many corners of the world. Finally, it was this great nation, Canada, which generously opened its doors and embraced my father, giving him the ability to dream big and work hard. With the belief that dedication and sincerity can make those dreams come true, he began his journey here. He dreamed for his children. He worked more than 15 hours a day, tirelessly, to provide for his family. He woke up at 5 a.m. every day, left for

work, and never did he complain. Watching him, I learned the meaning of perseverance.

He couldn't have done it alone.

My mother, like thousands of women in Scarborough, was the foundation of our family. Without a word of English, she guided us. Without knowledge of the lay of this new land, she protected us in times of crisis. She made sure we were fed, we were clothed, even had enough to pay for that school trip. She woke up before my father did so that he had a warm breakfast to eat. It didn't matter how tough it was; she didn't give up. And when necessary, she took the torch and became the breadwinner of our family. Watching her, I learned what it means to be resilient.

Like thousands of children in this province, I wanted to fulfill my parents' dreams, be educated, find a good job, give back to the community and open doors that they could not open.

From a young age, my brother and I were taught to always work much harder in order to break barriers. What strengthened our might was this land of hope—the belief that this country was a land of opportunity; that this great nation is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law to guarantee our fundamental rights and freedoms; that every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination, and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability. While enshrined in our Constitution, sometimes these words come under attack or have been muted willfully so as not to be implemented and practised to their fullest. And sometimes in the rhetoric of these words, those with power suppress these principles and their true meaning. Sometimes, in the theatrical standing ovations, those in power veil these fundamental rights of our Constitution.

When we declare that government is for the people, it must include the children, the students, the elders, the middle class, the working-class families, our immigrants, regardless of our income, employment status or the colour of our skin, or gender or sexual orientation. The people of this land form government, not to oppress them, ridicule them, mimic or laugh at them at the time of their sorrow, but to uphold this noble and worthy testament of our charter: that every individual is equal without discrimination—rich and poor, young and old, able-bodied or with a disability, Black, white or brown—all the people. We cannot let the creeping inequality grow and divide us. We are living in one of the greatest nations on earth, where our diversity is our strength and it is celebrated; where businesses continue to grow and prosper; where the dedication of our nurses and doctors saves lives through a universal public health care system that is the envy of many nations.

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We cannot let the false promises of our governments and half-hearted implementation of policies before an election undermine the sacrifice of our people. We cannot let governments use our children as numbers on wait-lists to make policies instead of their real needs.

Our people are working harder for less. Our students take all the right steps and yet cannot afford to go to university, and those who get into university and get the good grades can't get a job.

For over two decades, we have had government after government spread an illusion of devastation that has no escape and endless propaganda filled with fear in efforts to balance budgets through privatization and deep cuts. The scars from these deep cuts will remain, and the pain and tears of our people will not be forgotten. These scars will remain longer than a government's term.

The core of our responsibility lies in protecting the people and this province. This means defending our children who go to sleep hungry because we have had decades of neglect. Speaker, we live in a country like Canada; where did we go wrong? So we might ask ourselves, at these times of crisis—when our seniors are left without beds or proper care; when our workers' rights are under attack; when our schools are crumbling, putting our children and their future at risk; when our sick and poor are abandoned—how do we bring change? This responsibility may be shadowed under the allure of this government's power and their words of deceit, but it is in the remembrance of our sacrifice that we can do justice. It is in the recognition of our roots that we can be true to our duty—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. I would ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Doly Begum: I withdraw, Speaker.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: In 1967, former chief Dan George, the Tsleil-Waututh chief, spoke at Canada's centennial celebration. He said:

“Oh God! Like the thunderbird of old I shall rise again out of the sea; I shall grab the instruments of the white man's success—his education, his skills—and with these new tools I shall build my race into the proudest segment of your society.

“Before I follow the great chiefs who have gone before us, Oh Canada, I shall see these things come to pass. I shall see our young braves and our chiefs sitting in the houses of law and government, ruling and being ruled by the knowledge and freedoms of our great land.

“So shall we shatter the barriers of our isolation. So shall the next hundred years be the greatest in the proud history of our tribes and nations.”

It gives me great pride to be a member of Ontario's New Democratic Party, where I sit alongside, in this House, a very diverse group of brave elected members, breaking barriers every single day, representing every single corner of this province and its people. I take this responsibility very seriously and, like I was taught, I work three times as hard, like any immigrant child, person of colour, middle-class woman, true Scarberian or Ontarian does, to fulfill my responsibility.

Before I was in this House, I dedicated myself to standing up for our people, whether it was leading the fight against the sell-off of Hydro One; or working on the board of our local community centre, Warden Woods, to provide

services that improved the lives of my local community; or fighting for our health care system with the Ontario Health Coalition. To the people of Scarborough Southwest, this dedication and commitment will continue, and we will continue to protect your rights.

We have seen and felt the suffering of our parents and grandparents. We cannot let those sacrifices go to waste—we simply cannot. And with all the strength that God can give us, with our might, we the people will fight back to ensure that we keep moving forward, that the province we built for our children and the opportunities that they have are greater than those that we have had ourselves. In this time of crisis, we the people will become the saviours we were meant to be—the dream catchers of our parents—so we can build on the future our parents sacrificed everything for: a better tomorrow.

Thank you, Speaker.

Now I'd like to switch gears and speak to Bill 48, because this is a bill that is close to my heart as the critic for early learning and child care. The bill is the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act. I've spoken in this House before about the precious resources that we have in our province: our children. This bill really affects us. So it's an opportunity for me to speak to this bill.

As the opposition critic for early learning and child care, a big part of my role is to meet with parents, teachers, early childhood educators and child care workers to talk about the shared goal that we have: How can we create a safer and a more supportive, more accessible environment where our young ones can thrive? That question cannot be answered by simply putting forward legislation that has a nice title which both sides of the House can agree with.

A couple of weeks ago, in an earlier debate on this bill, the government member from Flamborough—Glanbrook stated, “The title of Bill 48 says it all.” I take my responsibility, as we have heard, very seriously. Back in June of last year, almost 20,000 people put their trust in me at the ballot box, and I try to represent the 110,000 constituents with care and compassion in every decision I make. I couldn't look my constituents in the eye if I came here every day and said, “Well, the title of this bill looks good, so I guess I'll vote for that.”

Speaker, a government that thinks good policy is made with a catchy slogan on the back of a napkin is one that fails Ontarians. We have to get into the details. That's our job. We have to think seriously about every piece of legislation and if we're really doing enough for the people we represent. That means opening up the process to experts—yes, even the people we may disagree with. That's how good policies are made. So it was disappointing for me, as a member of the Standing Committee on Social Policy, which looked at this bill, that the government shut down consultation at committee after we heard one day and one hour of testimony from education experts and the public, with almost no notice given.

There were valid concerns raised at committee—not just about the bill, but whether it does what it says in the title, and how effective this bill can be as part of the larger agenda of this government. That's an agenda that we have

seen does not prioritize the safety and support of our children and our students—whether it's through ballooning class sizes, cuts to funds for school repairs or after-school programs, or scrapping the sex ed curriculum that would have provided students with the knowledge they need to protect themselves.

Looking at this bill, there are elements that I support wholeheartedly—no question. Safeguarding our children against sexual assault, preventing those with a history of abuse and misconduct from being licensed to work in our classrooms—of course I agree with these. These individuals should be nowhere near our kids.

I want to spend some time now, however, to talk about this bill and how it could have been a little bit better and what it's missing in terms of making it safe and supportive for our children.

Let's look at the governance piece of this bill—and the member from Niagara West, I believe, already spoke to this. During the committee process, we heard from the Ontario College of Teachers about their concerns around the restructuring of the ratios of appointed and elected members. This could lead to the Ontario College of Teachers losing their self-governing status as appointed members outnumber those elected. Under the bill, subsection 4(2) of the Ontario College of Teachers Act is amended to allow the government to determine the composition of the council by prescribing the number of members to be elected and appointed, and appointing the chair. There's a lot of interference by the government happening here that I can see.

Subsections 25(1), 27(1) and 28(1) of the act are amended to allow the number of members on the investigation committee, discipline committee and fitness to practise committee to be prescribed by regulation.

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Those who serve the college in these roles should have a background in teaching. I'm not sure, but from what we have seen already in terms of appointments, we see a lot of questionable appointments being made, so I question whether these people will have teaching backgrounds when they become part of the governing body.

We have also seen it in our education system already, as my colleague mentioned, with the appointment of Cameron Montgomery, a failed PC candidate in the 2018 election, the full-time chair now of EQAO, making a \$140,000-a-year salary for a position that was previously \$3,600 a year, a part-time role. Given that Mr. Montgomery—am I pronouncing it right?

Mr. Jeff Burch: Montgomery.

Ms. Doly Begum: Montgomery—was one of the very few PC candidates who managed to lose to a Liberal last year, it doesn't give me much hope that this government's appointments are going to be based on meritocracy of any kind.

There has previously been consensus among all parties that teaching should be a self-governing profession. The government side, when they were in opposition, agreed to this. The changes to the Ontario College of Teachers Act in this bill may put that status in jeopardy.

Now I want to focus a little bit on the math test segment. I know the speakers from the government and the minister spoke to this quite a bit.

Subsection 18(1) of the Ontario College of Teachers Act would require all applicants for a teaching certificate to complete a math proficiency test. I understand that the government is trying to improve math skills, if we take their word for it, but from the committee room and all the deputants who came in, the idea of improving math skills—I get that. I agree with that. I wholeheartedly agree with that. But what it does is that it discourages a lot of people who may not be good test-givers but are amazing educators. That differentiation needs to be made. We had experts in the committee room who talked about their research for many, many years, who talked about a specific timeline of when a math test should be taken, a timeline of developmental training for these teachers—which, by the way, was scrapped. They also talked about the research necessary to make sure that we do not discourage teachers from becoming teachers because they're not good test-givers. This bill only focuses on providing a math test for teachers who may not be going through the training. Just recently, we saw this government cancel programs that were meant to provide training for our math teachers.

As things stand in the legislation, a person with an undergraduate or graduate degree in mathematics would need to take the new government-mandated math proficiency test to become a math teacher in Ontario. For a government that claims to detest unnecessary red tape, from what I can see, this is creating more red tape, Speaker.

At the same time as calling for math tests, this government is simultaneously cutting support for the existing Additional Basic Qualifications, or ABQ, program, which provides funding to assist teachers in taking math-teaching upgrading courses. To me, this makes no sense. If the government wants to improve mathematical proficiency among teachers, why would they scrap math training for teachers?

The ministry has not been able to point to a single example of another jurisdiction where a test of this nature has improved students' math scores. In fact, all of the other places they named as examples where similar testing occurs—Australia, the United Kingdom, New York City—have a lower average of PISA math scores than Ontario.

The math test provisions in this bill are an implementation of a campaign soundbite. By cutting math upgrading support for teachers while at the same time insisting on this test, the government is showing that they don't really care about improving math proficiency for teachers; they just want to score political points by pitting parents against our educators.

Now I want to talk a little bit about things that are not covered in this bill and would have actually made this bill safe and supportive for our classrooms. Earlier in my comments, I mentioned that we have to look at this bill and its impact on the safety of our classrooms in the context of the wider actions of this government. So I want to talk a little bit about safety specifically in the context of the changes to autism programs that are being planned, which

parents and autism service providers and we in the official opposition are pushing back very firmly against. We have actually had quite a few individuals who came to committee to talk about this and how they will be impacted or how their children will be impacted.

As an aside, the way business has been conducted over the bill is a perfect example of how I think this government needs to rethink its approach to involving outside voices in policy-making. The bill was first introduced late in October, and it sat on the order paper for a while, while going through this process. Then, all of a sudden, two weeks ago, it was rushed through committee, giving us about two days, and then we saw a time allocation motion to close down the process. This is the shutting down of dialogue and consultation in every way possible. The Standing Committee on Social Policy was given three and a half days' notice for just two days of committee hearings. Those who wanted to come before the committee—parents, educators, school boards, experts—had just one day to register their interest.

As a consequence of the sudden rush to get this bill through committee, I had to cancel my round table in my riding, which was for autism, to be in the committee room. The time of constituents and working people and, even more so, the time of parents who are raising these kids on the autism spectrum is extremely valuable. The chaotic way in which this government has conducted itself since the election and, particularly, its use of time allocation motions to rush through bills make it harder for us on both sides, I would say, to hear a real representation and the concerns of our constituents.

Thankfully, we were able to reschedule our round table, and I did get to listen to them. They were very concerned about the autism plan that this government has proposed. There were tears. There were a lot of parents who shared their stories about the fear they have of the new government plan and how this plan will actually make it harder for a lot of families to get enough hours of service. There was a mother who has an eight-year-old who has been on the wait list for many, many years. Speaker, these parents are scared. They're scared not just for themselves but for the province itself, because what we're doing right now, the way we're treating our children right now by not giving them enough hours—we're creating this big mess for our province in the future. What it means is long wait-lists for long-term care when these kids become older. What it means is hallway medicine increased because we haven't had proper development for these children.

Now, with Bill 48, on April 1 under the new changes, we're going to see students who are currently in the alternative therapy settings—kids on the autism spectrum, in many cases—going into classrooms without an appropriate transition and with insufficient support in those classes. The autism changes came up a lot. There is a lot of discussion about this bill and how this will relate, because we're looking at classrooms where we will have more kids with autism that haven't gone through their actual developmental therapy. What we're looking at is

teachers and EAs who are scared, who are devastated, because they are not trained to take care of these children. With class sizes already ballooning, there are real anxieties from educators that without the proper support, they're not going to be equipped to keep kids and, frankly, themselves safe in this environment.

Recently, I was in Hamilton doing another town hall with early childhood educators, with parents and with educators who are dealing with kids on the autism spectrum. There was an EA who has nightmares every night because she's afraid that she will not be able to take care of the kids in her classroom. It's not because she doesn't know her own profession; it's because the kids who will be in those classrooms and the special needs that they have and the amount of attention they will require—one person by herself will not be able to give that attention.

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I've heard from a lot of parents in my riding of Scarborough Southwest as well about how the changes to autism funding are going to rip away some of the hope that they have of receiving proper care and the hope that they have had for many years because they thought they would get proper hours of service after waiting for so long.

At committee for this bill, we heard from Dr. Sharon Gabison, a parent of a 22-year-old son with autism and a developmental disability. I thought Sharon's testimony was actually really powerful, and so I want to share a few lines from her testimony:

"What the government has done with the" new "autism program is basically tell everybody who needs a bypass that they're only going to bypass two vessels in the heart. When you show up to the hospital, if you need a quadruple bypass, you're only going to get a double bypass. And by the way, if you make over \$55,000, you have to pay for the second one. That's really what they have done." That's Sharon's quote.

Replacing the current overburdened wait-list for full service with a one-size-fits-all approach where everyone gets a little but nobody gets enough is a terrible solution, and parents have been vocal in telling the government about this. The real solution here is to properly invest in autism services, not reshuffle the funding envelope in this already far-too-small program.

Interjection.

Ms. Doly Begum: What you're providing right now will not service anybody. What you're providing right now will not provide service for anybody because when you need 20 hours of support, you need 20 hours of support. With four hours of support, those kids will not develop. It's simple solutions that experts have been talking about. When you need care, when you go in for an operation, you don't just do half the procedure and then tell your patient, "Okay, thank you very much. Your hour is finished. You have to go home. I can't stitch you up because your hour is finished." And that's what this autism plan will do. That's what we're telling our kids and our parents and our educators.

I have talked about a lot of these different topics, and we've talked about this in the committee room as well,

how this omnibus bill covers certain components that are essential but it doesn't do what it says in its title: safe and supportive classrooms. It's taking away the authority from educators. It's making it difficult. It's discouraging them. And it's not doing anything in terms of making our kids safe in the classroom.

The fundamental argument here is for our children. The most important and valuable lesson we should learn is from the past, from the failures of this government, of the Liberal government. We should learn what they have done wrong; we should learn from them. It's really sad, because this bill really just envelopes a lot of the mistakes of the Liberal government and just refurbishes them and puts them back on the table and calls them its own. That's not a real solution, Speaker. That's what we're doing.

I would like to give an opportunity to my colleague the member from Windsor West to speak to this bill, so I will end here. Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I now turn to the member from Windsor West to continue debate.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act. Before I get into the bill, I want to thank my colleague from Scarborough Southwest for sharing what it means to her to be in this Legislature, what it means to her family and the people that she represents for her to be in this Legislature. I think it speaks volumes to what most of us—I won't say all, unfortunately—as Canadians and Ontarians want to see in our province. When you have someone who comes from another country looking for a better life and they come here to Canada, and then you fast-forward a few years—because my colleague is still very young; younger than I am. But fast-forward a few years and here you have the daughter of an immigrant standing in the Ontario Legislature trying to make things better for people all over this province. I applaud the member from Scarborough Southwest for sharing her story with us.

Building on the bill, because the member from Scarborough Southwest also commented on the bill before us, Bill 48, safe and supportive classrooms, the member from Scarborough Southwest mentioned how the title of the bill is not at all really what the bill is about. If you really dig down into the bill—I had lots of notes prepared, but then the Minister of Education got up and spoke and gave me a whole new set of notes to go from. When you dig down into the bill, what's missing from the bill is actual legislation or policy, aside from one piece of the bill that talks about revoking a teacher's certificate if they have been found guilty of abusing a child. All the other pieces from this bill really don't talk about safe and supportive classrooms, because what has happened is that this Conservative government has taken away one of the key pieces in supporting students and providing safe classrooms, and that was when they took away the updated health and physical education curriculum.

The Minister of Education—we just got gassed from the other side of the room. But I can tell you, from my constituents from within the LGBTQ community, they are outraged that this Conservative government has tried to

erase their identities when it comes to our education system. They've tried to erase them. Those are the words of my constituents. Those are the words of some of our youngest learners, who are struggling to be accepted not just within their schools but within their communities and in some cases within their own families. The Minister of Education stood up here and justified them taking the updated curriculum out of here. She said they are getting the education system “back on track.” That track—

Applause.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I wouldn't applaud that. The Conservative side is applauding. I wouldn't applaud that, because what track you're on is a track back into the mid-1990s where people from the LGBTQ community were not only shunned for being who they were but they were beaten for being who they are.

Mr. David Piccini: Listen to yourself.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Wow. The member from Northumberland–Peterborough South just said to me, “Listen to yourself,” like he's trying to shame me. I am bringing the voice of my community and many communities across this province, and you should be ashamed for trying to shut down their voices.

Speaker, what we also don't see, if you want to talk about safe and supportive classrooms, is anything in this bill that addresses the \$16-billion funding shortfall for repairs to our schools. We have buildings that are crumbling around our students. We have schools with mould. This government has not addressed that. They haven't talked about it, and it certainly is not addressed in this bill. That's not a safe environment for our students to go to class in. It's not a supportive environment for students to be going to class in. In fact, what this government has done has taken \$100 million out of funding that would start to address the \$16-billion backlog. They've taken the damage that the Liberals have done over the last 15 years and they have made it worse.

They may think they're getting the education system back on track, but again, it's a track that's going backwards. It's not progress. It's not progress at all.

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The minister also talked about giving students and teachers the support they need. We heard the member for Windsor–Tecumseh, when he had two minutes to speak, talking about the fact that we have education workers in Kevlar. For anyone who's watching who isn't clear on what Kevlar is, Kevlar is what police officers wear, what law enforcement wear. It's like bulletproof vests, except some of our education workers wear that from head to toe. The reason that they have to do that—and I'm talking about teachers in kindergarten classrooms—is because our class sizes are getting larger. The supports for students with special education needs are getting smaller.

This government hasn't talked about increasing funding for special education. You talk to any board in this province, you talk to any education worker in this province, and they will tell you that special education is grossly and chronically underfunded. I used to be a trustee on a school board. I was the vice-chair of the board. We had to

make decisions on whether we were going to take money from programming or if we were going to take money out of school repairs—where we were going to take that money from in order to meet the shortfall in special education funding, so that some of our most vulnerable students, and in some cases our most needy students, could have the supports that they needed—not just the students; the teachers and the education workers who are there to help support them.

When you have teachers showing up to school and having to fully outfit themselves in Kevlar because the schools don't have the funding and the resources that they need to provide the supports to students, that is shameful. But this government, in this bill, hasn't addressed that. They haven't addressed it at all.

What they have done, what they have been supportive of, is appointing one of their own failed candidates to be the head of EQAO. What was up to a \$5,000-a-year job, a maximum \$5,000-a-year job—they just appointed one of their own failed candidates, one of their friends, and said, "We're going to give you \$140,000 to do this job." Tell me what this man—I'm not doubting his qualifications, but I would like to know.

The people of this province, the education workers, the parents of the students in the system, while their kids are in schools that are crumbling around them; while their kids are having to wear coats in the classroom in the wintertime because the schools don't have appropriate heat; while in May and June, near the end of the school year, kids are sweltering and need breaks—many kids are being herded into the gym to stand in front of fans, because there isn't appropriate ventilation and air conditioning in classrooms. There's a \$16-billion repair backlog and a chronic underfunding of special education, and this government prioritized giving one of their failed candidates and friends \$140,000 a year for a job that used to pay \$5,000? It's shameful.

Interjection: Wow.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's shameful. How do you justify that?

And there is a vast majority of educators and education workers and parents who will tell you that the EQAO, the standardized test, is a failure. Parents don't get the results until the year after their kids wrote the test. Many of the parents don't even know what the test means, because the government doesn't make sure that it's really explained to them. Parents are stressing out that their kids have to write this test. Kids are stressing out because they have to write this test.

This standardized test is not a fair representation of what is going on in the classrooms or of the learning going on in the classrooms, because you see, Speaker, what happens is that the students that have special education needs either get some of their supports taken away while they write the test, they get extra support so they can write the test, or they get excluded from writing the test altogether.

Other students go into a classroom where there have been prompts that are usually up on the wall to help them

with their learning. All of that is gone. All of that is covered up while these kids are doing the test. The environment that they normally would go to class in is completely wiped out while they write this test. Classrooms where kids normally wouldn't be able to eat, drink or chew gum, they're allowed to have it now because it helps the students deal with the stress of writing the test.

This test is not a fair representation of the educating that is going on in our classrooms or the learning that is going on in our classrooms; it's not. They should be doing random sampling to find out how students are really doing, but the government is not focusing on that. What the government is focusing on is giving their friend a cushy \$140,000 job.

And then, Speaker, they're talking about math scores, which is not really something that they campaigned on. It's certainly not something I heard when I was out knocking on doors. It wasn't something I heard for the four years I was an MPP, and it wasn't much that I heard when I was a trustee.

Interjections.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: They want their kids to have numeracy and literacy. Absolutely they want that, but let me tell you what happens. Let me tell you what happens—and educators will tell you the same; educators will tell you the same thing. They create a crisis. The government, with their standardized testing, creates a crisis. What they do is they say, "All of a sudden math scores are really, really low." They don't look at where those students go to school. They don't look at their socio-economic background. They don't look at possible stressors in their homes. They don't look at any of that.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry, on a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence on a point of order.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Sorry to interrupt. I've been trying to follow, and this really has nothing that I can see in relation to the bill under discussion, Bill 48. The other part of it was relevant, but we've gone on and on about EQAO, which I don't think you can stretch into safe and supportive schools, which is the other link you were using. That is my objection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I appreciate you raising that point. I've been listening to the member and tying it into what the Minister of Education has also referred to as well. I will allow her to continue. There may be a fine line there, but I will allow you to use your judgment, along with my judgment.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Thank you, Speaker. It's interesting that the member from Eglinton–Lawrence wasn't listening to her own members, especially the Minister of Education when she went on and on and on about math scores. Yes, we could stretch a conversation about EQAO for a long time. The Minister of Education did. I'm not sure we can stretch it for \$140,000-a-year worth of conversation, but the PCs seem to think you can.

Speaker, what happens with math scores when you look at standardized testing? They look at those test scores and

they say, “Okay”—they assume that every kid who wrote that test in grade 3 is still in that same school in grade 6, so they compare those scores. That’s not always the case. They don’t look at the socio-economic backgrounds of those kids. They don’t look at stressors at home for those kids. They don’t look at what’s going on in the world around those kids when they’re looking at test scores.

What they do is, they look at the test score and they go, “Oh, my gosh, we have a crisis in math.” Speaker, the Liberal government before them did the same thing. Ask educators; they’ll tell you. They look at it and say, “We have a crisis in math.” So they pour all of these extra resources into math learning, which is great if the kids need it and the teachers need the support—fantastic. But then what happens is, while they’re putting all of this emphasis into math, those scores go up and the literacy scores drop, and then oh, my gosh, Speaker, we have a crisis when it comes to literacy. So they shift gears and they put all those resources into literacy to get those scores up. Those scores start to go up because those teachers and the students have the extra resources they need. And what happens, Speaker? It’s like a see-saw. Those numeracy scores drop again, those math scores.

What we need is for government to stop creating—“creating” because that is what they are doing. By relying on standardized testing like EQAO, they are creating the crisis. What they need to be doing is talking to the educators. Talk to the education workers and find out what the actual needs of the students are. Not every student will have the same needs, and not every student learns the same way. They need to give the education workers, the teachers, the professionals, some flexibility to actually be able to reach the students that they are there to support, and that’s not happening and it’s not addressed in this bill. They’re not creating a supportive learning environment for these students.

1740

The minister talked about financial literacy, and in her comments about financial literacy—and I’m not going to argue that that’s very important; I think that parents have a role to play in that and I think the education system has a role to play in that, absolutely, no doubt. But what the Minister of Education didn’t recognize is that there are so many families that are living at or below the poverty line. When the government put a halt to the planned minimum wage increase, these families can plan all they want based on the income they have, but they’re going to have to make tough choices that we in this room don’t have to make.

The minister talks about teaching kids to be able to go out and buy produce and make wise food choices. Many of these children come from homes where they can’t afford produce. They can’t afford it. They can’t make that wise choice because they don’t have the money to make that choice. I cannot tell you how much it bothers me and how hurtful it is when you hear people in powerful positions, such as MPPs and especially the government side, talking about people making wise decisions with their money when the fact of the matter is that if I’m living on ODSP or Ontario Works, or I’m a minimum wage earner

and I’m trying to feed a family on that and put clothes on their back and make sure they have the supplies that they need for school—if I have to make that decision, it’s shameful that, in this province, it’s cheaper to go out and buy garbage food, stuff that is not good for you, than it is to be able to go buy produce.

I’m sure that the northern members will tell you that when you’re talking about northern communities, especially remote communities, when you’re talking about some of our First Nations people, the cost of produce is outrageous. It’s outrageous, so we can’t talk about teaching kids financial literacy when, down the road, you’re not going to pay them a decent wage so that they can actually make healthy decisions.

The Minister of Education also said that the Conservatives are sure that math scores are low because the teachers don’t really know enough math, that they’re not educated. I’m paraphrasing. That’s not her direct quote, but that’s basically what she said: that the teachers need more support; that they themselves need more learning in math. Perhaps that’s the case for some of them, but Speaker, why are we saying that every single teacher who goes through to become a teacher has to be an expert in math? Not every teacher is going to be teaching math. Not every student is going to pursue a career solely based on math. What they need to be doing is looking at our education system, talking to educators, talking to parents and students, actually listening to—not just hearing—what they’re saying, and ensuring that teachers have the opportunity to learn what it is that the students need in order to be successful when they go in a career. But that’s not happening.

We talk about tech jobs. The minister talked about skilled trades. I cannot believe that the Minister of Education stood up here and talked about what great jobs skilled trades jobs are, that you can get a six-figure salary, and yet this government tabled a bill that attacks the skilled trades. You have got to be kidding me. They are masters of word salad on the other side of the floor here. And the sad thing is, the people in this province—many of them—that they say need financial literacy couldn’t afford to buy that word salad.

Speaker, I want to talk again about the supports for students with special education needs. Again, you ask any board across this province, you ask any educator or education worker in the system, and they will tell you that funding for special education is grossly and chronically underfunded. And yet we have a PC government who just changed the program—it wasn’t the best program; I’m not going to say the Liberals did the best job—but what they’ve done is, they have taken it from bad to much, much worse.

They want to talk about getting rid of a wait-list? Well, that’s easy enough. At the end of the day at a walk-in clinic, when the doctor is done, for anybody on that list, “The doctor’s done. Come back tomorrow.” Guess what? They just cleared the wait-list because they threw everybody out. Speaker, that’s what this government is doing, and they refuse to acknowledge that parents and experts

are very clearly telling them that this Ontario Autism Program that they are so staunchly behind is actually going to hurt kids.

Well, we're going to hear all about it tomorrow, out on the front lawn of Queen's Park when these parents come from all over the province. They're coming from Conservative ridings too. They're going to fill the lawn and they are going to fill the gallery here, and what they are telling this government is, for the kids that are already in service, their services are now going to be reduced, and when you take those services away, those kids start to slide backwards in their progress. So if that's what the Minister of Education meant by getting back on track, they're on track to taking kids backwards in their progress when it comes to ASD.

They want to stand up and applaud themselves. I'm surprised the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services hasn't torn her rotator cuff from patting herself on the back so often, or blown out a lung from the amount that she yells from the other side of the room. But just because you yell it doesn't mean it's true. Clearing the wait-list is only a priority if those kids are getting the supports and services that will actually benefit them.

One of the parents that was at a rally in Windsor said this to me, and I'm really hoping that on the government side it will sink in: "Giving each person one grain of rice will not solve world hunger." And then she said what they are doing with the Ontario Autism Program is exactly that. No child will get the supports and services that they actually need to help them progress and help them thrive—not a one of them. But this government is digging in their heels and they are doubling down because they are taking away those supports and services and they're sending all those kids to school with funding that doesn't meet the needs of the kids in the education system. Again, special education in schools is grossly and chronically underfunded, and this government is going to send those kids into classrooms without the supports and services that they need. What you're going to find is that more of these kids are going to have behavioural issues because they're not being supported; they are not being understood. For some of these kids, the only way that they know how to communicate is through their behaviour. For some of these kids, they withdraw, and for some of these kids, they lash out. If this government would just recognize that there is a correlation to what goes on in someone's personal life and how that affects the education system, maybe, just maybe, they would be moving on the track that takes them in the right direction. But they're not, Speaker, and they're not even willing to listen to the families.

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They can ignore this side of the House all they want, but it's the families—

Interjection: The kids.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: —it's the kids, it's the experts in the field that are telling them this, both in the education system—the Ontario Principals' Council just came out and said, "This is going to hurt our education system. Please stop this." And the fact that they've announced this change

to the Ontario Autism Program, which is to take effect April 1, and the Minister of Education hasn't even told the educators, hasn't told the school boards what they're going to do to support the education system so that these kids get some help in school—that's shameful. They can talk about working together all they want, but they're not working together, Speaker.

I said to the Minister of Education that when it comes to this bill overall, it's a level 4. This government and this Minister of Education get a level 4. For those that don't know what a level 4 is—I would hope the Minister of Education doesn't, but I encourage the Minister of Education to look it up. Because a level 4 isn't a good thing. It's way below provincial standard.

In this province, the standard should be much, much higher when it comes to providing supports and services for not only the students but for the parents and for the education workers in the system. This government is failing—failing miserably, Speaker.

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

Mr. Roman Baber: Speaker, in the limited time I have, I first of all want to congratulate my friend from Scarborough Southwest. I listened to a portion of her speech and I want to congratulate her sincerely for her success and for her family's journey. I can't think of a more appropriate day to welcome her and congratulate her than today, which is Toronto's 185th birthday. Where else but in Toronto could we listen to each other, get along with one another, respect one another and, frankly, be friends despite our political differences and despite some lack of consensus that we experience in this House?

Which brings me to my friend from Windsor: I probably need a little bit more time to address her comments, so I'll try and address two issues very quickly. One point she made was the price of produce. Now, I don't understand produce much. The only veggies I get are on a burger. But realistically, Mr. Speaker, produce prices are up, but it's the opposition party's policies that typically drive prices up. When you're anti-business, prices go up. When you want to increase taxation, the price of produce goes up. When you want impose a carbon tax, the price of produce goes up. So my view is—

Interjection: Hydro.

Mr. Roman Baber: When you want to increase the price of hydro, that goes up. So I would encourage my friend from Windsor to consider carefully the types of policies that her party stands for, and to understand what in fact drives the price of produce.

In the time I have, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Niagara Falls—I like how you say that, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 48, the Safe and Supportive Classrooms Act: I want to talk about my colleague from Scarborough Southwest. She talked very passionately. When you talk for your first time—we've all done it; our first chance to really talk

about why we ran and all those types of things. I listened to her very passionately talk about how her father came to this country. Whether we want to admit it—and I know some people on that side of the House, quite frankly, might not agree with immigration, but immigration built this great country. We built this great country. And her father came to this country for one reason: He wanted to make a better life for his daughter—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. I'm going to have to ask the member to withdraw. You're walking a fine line there. You might even be imputing motives, so please choose your words carefully.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I withdraw.

I want to say to her, I was very touched by your father coming to this country and making a better life for you. I want to say to you and I want to say to your dad, he did a heck of a job. You're here in this Legislature, where, out of 12 million or 14 million people, only about 137 get elected. I want to say congratulations. I want to say thank you to your father for coming to this great country and having a great family.

I've got 20 seconds left. I can't go without talking about the \$140,000 man: Cameron Montgomery. He took a part-time job and ended up getting paid from \$5,000 to \$140,000. And do you know what? He was rejected by the riding that he ran in, and he got an appointment for \$140,000. Do you know what that lesson is? Let's lose our election and get a raise. Just say it. Thank you.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I couldn't help but relate to some of the comments the member opposite was saying in terms of her voyage and history here in Canada. Her voyage is very similar to my family. I came to Canada at the age of four as a refugee, and many children in my school did not even know what that term meant or what it was, nor what immigrants were. It was a very interesting experience nevertheless.

Similar to your family, my family came here for hope and opportunity. But we believed in the equality of opportunity, not equality of outcome. A lot of what this bill is about is just that: Making sure that every child in our classroom has the equality of opportunity, opportunity to compete with students all around the world. We live in a global economy and we have to compete with countries that are really succeeding in science and math, like Singapore and Japan. Estonia is even up there right now if you look at the Programme for International Student Assessment around the world.

That's what it's really about, Mr. Speaker. It's making sure that when students come home and they're doing math homework with their parents and they're doing long division, or they're asked to take 1,128 and divide it by 36 and what would that be, many students can't even answer that it would be 32. Instead, they would be estimating it.

It's those fundamentals that disadvantage our children here. Whether you're born in Canada or you're an immi-

grant to Canada, we all deserve the equality of opportunity. Why would we disadvantage our children by not letting them get ahead, teaching them the fundamentals, getting rid of discovery math, going back to inquiry math, things that teach the fundamentals, the basics, long division, subtraction, multiplication? That doesn't have a language barrier. Many people around the world understand numbers and our children should too.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member for Windsor West on a point of order.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Thank you, Speaker. I would actually like to correct my record. I said the government gets a level 4, but that is actually the highest grade you can get. What they actually get is a level 1.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Further questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Bill 48, the only bill so far yet to be time-allocated—every other bill in this House from this government has been time-allocated. I think it's instructive to look at Hansard and what the members and ministers have said about time allocation when they were the official opposition.

For example, April 10: "We're debating yet another time allocation motion on a government bill. Again and again, the government has shown disrespect for the democratic process by cutting short debate in the House." Laurie Scott, labour minister, said that before she was labour minister.

We've seen this so many times before. Municipal affairs and housing—I know the minister is here. May 16: "When you talk about a time allocation motion, this is the equivalent of their blocking button that they would use on Twitter or Facebook. They're trying to block as many comments from Ontarians as possible.... I think that their strategy for their whip and their House leader and their House leader's staff is the wrong strategy for Ontarians. I can't emphasize enough that the opportunity to have meaningful debate without cutting off debate ... is the way to go." Thank you, Mr. Clark.

Here's a good one. The Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry on May 1: "But we want the people to have something to say about the legislation.... The time allocation motion, in so many ways, Speaker, talks about the actions of a democratic institution and an undemocratic government that has turned it into a dictatorship. I believe it is my right to talk about their actions in this House."

I have so many more. I can't wait for the next opportunity to get into this, Speaker, because every bill they've introduced so far in this House since last June has been time-allocated, cutting off debate. They don't want the public to have a say, they don't want the opposition to have a say, and it's just a matter of time before they time-allocate Bill 48.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now we return to the member from Scarborough Southwest for her final comments.

Ms. Doly Begum: First, I would like to thank the member from York Centre for your kind words, and the member from Barrie–Innisfil. Thank you so much to the member from Niagara Falls, as well as the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for taking part.

It gives me great honour to be in this House. If we don't agree with things, it doesn't matter, as long as we have a healthy debate. What I would like to end with is the fact that I hope we continue—or at least start—to have a healthy debate, because even on this bill I actually had an amendment which was from the College of Early Childhood Educators.

I want to take the next minute to share this, because this amendment that I proposed was from the College of Early Childhood Educators. It would have allowed the college to help members who are incapacitated by mental illness or addiction, help them get back on track and back to work.

Right now the college has a complaints committee. What it means is that if someone is incapacitated, it goes

to the discipline committee and they're unlicensed and they lose their job. What this amendment would have done is that it would have allowed someone to get the medical assessment and hopefully get back to work after treatment. Unfortunately, the government rejected that amendment, and I don't understand why. There was no reason for it, and they shut down that dialogue.

What I would really hope in this House is that that healthy dialogue, that discussion, the consultation—to make sure that we represent the people who voted for us, because that's number one. We are here representing our constituents. Their voice is what matters. If we're not doing the job of representing the people and what they ask us to do, then we're not doing our job.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank all members this afternoon for a healthy and sometimes enthusiastic debate.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It is, however, 6 o'clock and this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1803.

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Roman Baber, Aris Babikian
Nathalie Des Rosiers, Jill Dunlop
Parm Gill, Lindsey Park
Ross Romano, Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria
Sara Singh, Monique Taylor
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Jocelyn McCauley

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Présidente: Jane McKenna
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam
Robert Bailey, Rima Berns-McGown
Lorne Coe, Michael Coteau
Mike Harris, Faisal Hassan
Jane McKenna, Christina Maria Mitas
Sam Oosterhoff, Gurratan Singh
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Présidente: Catherine Fife
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Peggy Sattler
Toby Barrett, Catherine Fife
Goldie Ghamari, Jim McDonell
Norman Miller, Suze Morrison
Michael Parsa, Peggy Sattler
Kinga Surma
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Kaleed Rasheed
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Will Bouma
Will Bouma, Paul Calandra
Lorne Coe, Stephen Crawford
Mitzie Hunter, Laura Mae Lindo
Paul Miller, Billy Pang
Kaleed Rasheed, Amarjot Sandhu
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Présidente: Nina Tangri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Deepak Anand
Deepak Anand, Doly Begum
Jeff Burch, Amy Fee
Michael Gravelle, Joel Harden
Belinda Karahalios, Robin Martin
Sheref Sabawy, Nina Tangri
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Select Committee on Financial Transparency / Comité spécial
de la transparence financière**

Chair / Président: Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Doug Downey
Roman Baber, Doug Downey
Catherine Fife, Robin Martin
Lindsey Park, Ross Romano
Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria, Sandy Shaw
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim